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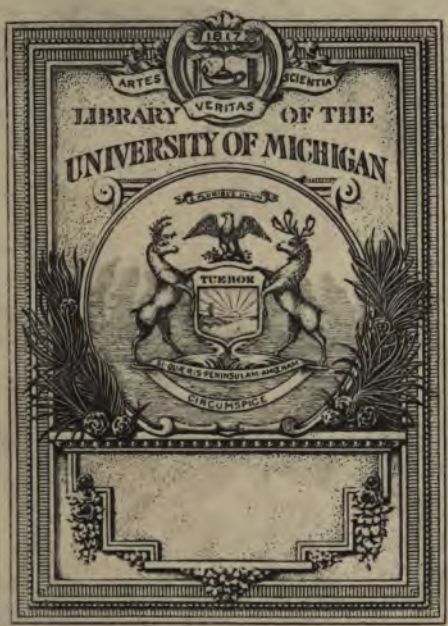
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Impartial Enquiry

Into the EXISTENCE and

NATURE OF GOD:

Being a MODEST ESSAY towards a more INTELLIGIBLE ACCOUNT of the DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

With REMARKS on ſeveral AUTHORS both ANCIENT and MODERN; and Particularly on ſome Paſſages in Dr. CLARKE's DEMONSTRATION OF THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

In TWO BOOKS.

With an APPENDIX concerning the Nature of SPACE and DURATION.

The THIRD EDITION.
With conſiderable Additions and Improvements, made partly with Regard to ſome Objections of the Reverend Mr. *JACKSON.*

By SAMUEL COLLIBER.

Sapientiam ſibi adimunt, qui ſine ullo Judicio Inventa Majorum probant. Sed hoc eos fallit, quod Majorum nomine audito, non putant fieri poſſe ut aut ipſi plus ſapiant, quia Minores vocantur, aut illi deſipuerint, quia Majores nominantur.
Lactantius Lib. 2. Divinarum Inſt. Cap. 8.

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THE PREFACE.

THE general good Reception which this Eſſay has met with from Men of Learning and Impartiality, has given Occaſion to another Edition; in which Care has been taken to make ſeveral Additions and Improvements.

What I have further to ſay by way of Preface, ſhall be comprized in few Words.

If the main Principles contained in this Enquiry are either ſelf-evident, or elſe fully demonſtrated; if the Hypotheſes propoſed for obviating Objections are agreeable to Reaſon, and not diſa-

greeable to Scripture; if by proceeding upon thoſe Principles and Hypotheſes, not only the great Truths of Religion have been eſtabliſhed, but a Diſcovery has been made of the Grand Source of Error, which has for many Ages lain hid, like the Head of the *Nile*, and overwhelmed the Chriſtian World with Diſputes and Contentions (as ſome are inclined to think) I have ſufficiently gain'd my End.

But if this ſhould not be the Caſe, yet 'tis hoped this Eſſay may ſtill be of Uſe, by giving Occaſion to ſome abler Perſon to undertake the ſame moſt difficult and important Enquiry with Succeſs.

In the mean time, I enjoy the Satisfaction of having, (in the midſt of Diſcouragements) contributed my ſincereſt Endeavours towards promoting the Cauſe of Religion in general, without being bigoted to the particular Intereſt of any Sect or Party whatever.

S. COLLIBER.

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AN

Impartial Enquiry

INTO THE

Exiſtence and Nature of *GOD*.

BOOK the FIRST.

CHAP. I.

THE human Mind is never ſo agreeably employ'd, as when it tries its Strength in Enquiries of this Sort: When it takes a View of the whole Frame of Nature, and diſcovers the mighty Spring which ſet it in Motion: When it pierces into the inmoſt Subſtance of Things to that inviſible Cement which unites them: When it traces them back to their Original, and from the Nature of the Effects infers the Perfection of the Cauſe; and when from a nearer Acquaintance with the Perfection of the Firſt Cauſe, it proceeds to form Rules for its own Conduct, in

in order to a more exact Conformity to ſo noble a Pattern.

Some Thouſands of Years have been already ſpent in theſe Enquiries, and conſiderable Diſcoveries have been made both from Scripture and Reaſon; ſufficient at leaſt for the Conduct of Life, and perhaps enough to have ſatisfied any Age leſs curious and philoſophical than our own. But it has been our Fortune to viſit the World, at a Time wherein as we have ſeen the Range and Compaſs of human Knowledge ſo nicely adjuſted and determined,* ſo we ſee daily Attempts towards the extending it to its utmoſt Limits. The Event, it is to be hop'd, may at laſt be, that the great Truths of Religion will be fix'd on their proper and natural Principles, and ſet in ſo clear a Light, that by a nearer Agreement in Opinion, human Nature may appear with more Uniformity, and Piety may be thought as neceſſary to complete the Character of a Man of Senſe, as Libertiniſm and Immorality have been.

'Tis, I think, the Right and Duty of every capable Perſon to improve and employ his Faculties, and to take his own Meaſures in the Search of Truth. There muſt be a Judgment of Diſcretion with reference to the Scriptures, and a Liberty of Reaſoning in all other Caſes; provided they be exerciſed with Modeſty, from a ſincere Deſire to diſcover and embrace the Truth, and with entire Submiſſion to better Information.

I conceive, that whoever will undertake an Enquiry of this Nature, can't begin it better, than with an impartial Search into ſuch Miſtakes and Miſmanagements as may have caus'd the ill Succeſs of former Enquiries. Several of theſe we may be capable of detecting in the preſent Caſe: Which we ſhall briefly mention; not with Deſign to expoſe the Failings and Weakneſſes of others, but purely to form ſuch Cautions as may be of Uſe to ourſelves.

The

* See Mr. *Locke* of Hum. Und. Book 4. Chap. 3.

The Occaſions of any ill Succeſs that hath attended former Enquiries, we ſhall find to have been either more general and common to all or moſt of the preceeding Ages and Nations, or more particular and peculiar to ſome.

The more general will appear to have been,

1. *Intereſt* and *Deſign*. Theſe were eſpecially the Imperfections of the *Prieſts*. The firſt Lawgivers, or Founders of Civil Government among the *Pagans*, finding how difficult it was to infuſe the Sentiments of Religion and Civility into the ſtupid unthinking Vulgar by Argument and Perſuaſion, did it moſt effectually by a Pretence of divine Enthuſiaſms and Revelations. By this Method they wiſely ſerv'd themſelves of the Principle of *Fear*, which is ever the ſtrongeſt and moſt vigorous Spring of Action, and which we uſually find to be moſt predominant in thoſe who lie leaſt open to the Methods of Conviction. Thus *Zamolxis* wrought the rude unpoliſh'd *Scythians* into a Belief that he received the Laws and Precepts of his Religion in a Den, where he ſaid he convers'd with the Gods. *Numa*, the Founder of Religion and Civility among the *Romans*, is ſaid to have conceal'd himſelf in a Wood, pretending to receive Inſtructions from the Goddeſs *Ægeria*. And *Mango Copac*, the Introducer of the *Peruvian* Superſtition, is reported to have feign'd himſelf to have been ſent on his Errand by his Parent the *Sun*.

To carry on the Deſign ſo ſucceſsfully begun, we find that a certain Order of Men was every where inſtituted, whoſe peculiar Employment it was to inſtruct the People in the Duties of Religion. And to give the greater Reputation and Authority to the *Prieſthood*, we find that Princes themſelves thought it no Diſparagement to unite the Mitre with the Crown, and at once to rule and teach their Subjects. Thus among the ancient *Egyptians*, the Kings were always inveſted with the High-Prieſthood, and entruſted with

with the Myſteries of their Religion as well as Government. The like is reported of *Numa* among the *Romans*.

But though the Deſign of thoſe primitive Lawgivers was good, yet ſince their Models of Religion were not ſufficiently founded on Reaſon, but politickly ſet together in ſuch Manner as was moſt agreeable to the Humour and Reliſh of the People to whom they were preſcrib'd, and moſt ſubſervient to the preſent Intent of the Inſtitutor; they, in time, prov'd the Occaſions of great Inconveniencies. For the Pretence of Revelation became an effectual Bar to future Improvements: The Prieſts fearing leſt the Alteration of any Particular ſhould tempt the People to ſuſpect the whole, and call in queſtion the pretended Revelation on which 'twas founded. And the Prieſthood, which at firſt was ſo noble and uſeful an Inſtitution, degenerating by Degrees into a Trade, and being taken up by moſt with no other View or Deſign but that of Gain, the Prieſts ſoon found it their Intereſt to diſcourage all ſuch Speculations as tended to breed a Diſlike of that Superſtition which yielded them ſuch great ſecular Emoluments.

In ſome Countries indeed we read, that the Prieſts were Philoſophers too. But tho' we may believe that they themſelves, by the Exerciſe of Reaſon, diſcover'd the Vanity of divers of thoſe Methods of Religion that had been impos'd on the People; yet they induſtriouſly conceal'd their Sentiments as *Myſteries* not to be imparted to the Vulgar, whoſe Ignorance was the chief Support of that profitable Devotion which Intereſt taught them to cheriſh and improve. At leaſt, they were not perhaps inclinable to be at the Expence of much Pains in Matters of Speculation, while they obſerv'd the People might be treated at a far cheaper Rate with trifling Ceremonies and religious Pageantry. This is certain, that we find 'em, in the general, to have been ſo far from inſtructing the People either in

better

better Principles or Methods of Worſhip, that they rather added to the Impoſture, by frequent Inventions of new and more gainful Fopperies.

2. Another conſiderable Obſtruction to the Increaſe and Improvement of Divine Knowledge in the former Ages of the World, was *Pride* or *Vanity*. This ſeems to have been the epidemical Diſeaſe of the *Philoſophers*. We may trace its Symptoms as well among the ſlovenly *Cynicks* of *Greece*, or the ſavage *Gymnoſophiſts* of *Ethiopia*, as among the politer *Magi* of *Perſia*, or *Brachmans* of *India*. This divided them into innumerable Factions, and often cauſed their Philoſophy to degenerate into big Words and inſignificant Sophiſtry; while almoſt every Man had a more paſſionate Concern for the Reputation of his Sect, than for the Intereſt of Truth. A remarkable Inſtance of this philoſophical Pride is to be met with in the Life of *Apollonius Tyanæus*; who travelling into *India* to converſe with the *Brachmans*, was told by them, that he might propoſe what Queſtions he pleaſed, ſince he was come to Men who knew all Things. And for ought appears, by their magical Jugglings, and a few quibbling Replies to his Queſtions, they at laſt ſo far impos'd on that Philoſopher, as to work him into a Belief of this their pretended Omniſcience. And certainly, when Men once arrive either at ſuch a Pitch of Diſtraction as to imagine themſelves ignorant of nothing, or at ſuch a Degree of Folly as to believe it concerning others, we need not be ſurpriz'd if either the former Sort lay aſide all Endeavours after further Improvement, or the latter neglect all other Methods, and depend entirely on the oracular Dictates of ſuch Pretenders.

3. Another Hindrance to this Sort of Knowledge, was *Ignorant Zeal*. This was the general Unhappineſs of the *Populace*, and was a Tool which their Prieſts very well knew how to uſe to their own Advantage. Thus when *Socrates* had divulg'd ſome Notions

tions tending to mar their Trade, they fail'd not to ſet the People againſt him, and never ceas'd till that great Man fell a Sacrifice to their Reſentments. This, and divers other Inſtances of the like Nature, could not but be a very great Miſchief, either by entirely diſcouraging Enquiries of this Sort, or at leaſt by obliging Men to diſſemble and diſguiſe their Sentiments.

Theſe appear to have been the general Cauſes of the little Progreſs of Divine Knowledge in the former Ages of the World. The more particular are to be deriv'd from the peculiar Genius and Conſtitutions of the ſeveral Nations and Sects which have diſtinguiſh'd themſelves in this Sort of Philoſophy. Theſe were the *Eaſtern Pagans*, the *Greeks*, the *Romans*, the *Jews*, and the *Chriſtians*.

1. The *Eaſtern Pagans*, ſuch were the *Indians*, *Chaldeans*, *Perſians*, *Phœnicians*, *Ethiopians*, *and Egyptians*. Theſe appear to have been, in the general, of a light, deſultory Wit, impatient of Thought, conceited of their Knowledge, ſcorning to borrow from others, and backward to communicate of their own. Their Divine Learning was preſerv'd, or rather impriſon'd, by certain particular Orders or Societies: Among the *Indians* by the *Brachmans*, among the *Chaldeans* and *Perſians* by the *Zabii* and *Magi*, among the *Ethiopians* by the *Gymnoſophiſts*, and among the *Egyptians* by their *Arſepedonaptæ* or *Prieſts*. It conſiſted of certain *Cabala*'s or Rhapſodies of Traditional Opinions, neither clearly expreſs'd, nor, perhaps, well underſtood. Theſe they appear to have taken upon Truſt, convinc'd by no other Argument ſo much as by the Reputation and Authority of their *Brahma*, *Zoroaſter*, *Hermes*, and the other Introducers of their reſpective Superſtitions. The Dictates of theſe they eſteem'd as ſacred and unimproveable; and thought they acquitted themſelves ſufficiently well, by barely tranſmitting them ſafe to their

their Poſterities. Their Reputation for Wiſdom in Divine Matters ſeems to have been owing chiefly to their magical Tricks and myſtick Ceremonies and Hieroglyphicks: It being the general Weakneſs of Men moſt to admire what they leaſt comprehend.

2. The *Greeks*. Theſe learn'd the Rudiments of their divine Philoſophy from the *Egyptians*. *Orpheus*, who firſt imported the *Egyptian* Myſteries into *Greece*, began that Commerce, which was carried on and improv'd by many of the ſucceeding Poets and Philoſophers; inſomuch that it ſoon became a common Practice to travel into other Countries to traffick for Notions, and to pick up ſtraggling Traditions, which when they came home they dreſs'd with a *Grecian* Air, and vended for their own. Yet theſe were generally the beſt of their Philoſophers. For ſuch who kept at home, and ſpun their Opinions out of their own Brains, (though divers of them Men of great Wit and Induſtry) were, for the moſt Part, too much troubled with the Itch of Innovation, and the Ambition of ſeeming conſiderable, by ſetting themſelves at the Head of new Sects. Hence ſprung perpetual Brawls*, and a confus'd Medley of Opinions, till their Philoſophy (their Morality excepted) either vaniſh'd in Scepticiſm, or to a great Degree degenerated into the moſt ridiculous Sophiſtry.

3. The *Romans*. Theſe were at firſt a rude unpoliſh'd People, more addicted to Arms than Arts. 'Twas a conſiderable Time before they would admit the *Greek* Philoſophy; partly out of Pride, as ſcorning to be taught by Inferiors; partly out of Policy, as fearing leſt it ſhould ſoften and debaſe their Spirits. But afterwards, we find they ſeldom conquer'd a Country, but they were very careful to introduce its Gods into the *Pantheon*, and its Arts and Sciences into their Academies. The firſt of the *Grecian* Arts that got Admiſſion at *Rome*, and made

* *Vid.* Luciani Timon.

Way for the reſt to follow, was *Rhetorick*. Though nothing ſeem'd better qualified to abtain a Welcome among thoſe rough Mortals than the *Art of Perſuaſion* itſelf, yet its Succeſs was not ſo much the Effect of its own Force, as of another Cauſe. *Rome* was at that time become an Enemy to the Name, as well as to the Power of Kings, and had moulded itſelf into the Form of a Common-wealth. The ſupreme Power reſided in the People, and ſuch as could beſt make their Court to them, ſtood the faireſt Candidates on all Elections to Places of Honour and Profit. This made all who aſpir'd to Commands in the Common-wealth, very fond of that Art which gained them ſo great Influence on the People, and taught them to govern their Superiors. Wherefore, we need not wonder that *Rhetorick* loſt nothing, but rather improv'd by being tranſplanted to *Rome*, where no Culture was wanting to render it more flouriſhing than in its native Soil. But as for *Philoſophy*, the Caſe was different. The Philoſophers had wrangled themſelves out of much of that Reputation they had formerly gain'd. They found but few *Dionyſiuſſes*, or *Alexanders*, even in *Greece*. Beſides, the Bent of the *Roman* Genius was entirely turn'd upon Action. A People bred amidſt the Noiſe of Arms, could find but little Convenience for Contemplation. And even afterwards, when Philoſophy began to be more faſhionable at *Rome*, we find but few that made it their Buſineſs. The Generality conſider'd it chiefly as an agreeable Amuſement in their Retreats from the Service of the Publick; content to ſtrike in with ſome or other of the *Grecian* Sects, without attempting either to ſet up for themſelves, or to improve on the ancient Stock.

4. The *Jews*. Their Theology appears to have been entirely founded on Divine Revelation. They reaſoned but little upon it for a long Time, having leſs Temptation

Temptation than other Nations, as enjoying that Satisfaction by a long Series of Miracles and Predictions, which as effectually convinced them of the Truth of their Revelation, as the immediate Teſtimony of Reaſon could have done. Yet when Miracles and Predictions became leſs frequent, towards the Declination of the *Jewiſh* State, we find they began to philoſophiſe after the Manner of their Neighbours, eſpecially after their Conqueſt by *Antiochus Epiphanes*, who erected an Academy at *Jeruſalem* to inſtruct them in the *Pythagorean*, *Platonick*, and *Epicurean* Philoſophy. Thence ſprung divers Sects, and Variety of abſurd Opinions, which, in a great Degree continu'd, notwithſtanding the ſevere Prohibition of the *Greek* Philoſophy by the *Maccabees*. In general, they appear to have been no great Maſters in the Art of Reaſoning; both their ancient and modern Philoſophy being little elſe but a Medley of ridiculous Apophthegms, and extravagant Conceits concerning their Law and their Traditions, which they prefer before it.

5. The *Chriſtians*. Theſe reaſoned but little at firſt, chiefly from the ſame Cauſe with the ancient *Jews*, *viz.* on account of the frequent Miracles, which were more confirming to themſelves, and convictive to their Adverſaries than Arguments. When they began to diſpute with the Heathens, they uſually fought them with their own Weapons, and confuted them from their own Principles: For the moſt celebrated Fathers of the primitive Church were bred in *Plato*'s School. Yet though the *Platonick* Philoſophy did ſome Service againſt their Adverſaries, it at laſt turn'd to the great Prejudice of themſelves; for ſome of its Principles not well ſuiting with divers of the Doctrines of their Religion, produc'd endleſs Diſputes, which not a little diſtracted their Thoughts, and prevented the Improvement of real Knowledge. In Time *Plato*'s Philoſophy grew out

of Reputation, and *Ariſtotle* (firſt introduced by *Boetius*) began to be ador'd. Then Learning was nothing elſe but an Inſight into his Opinions, and that was always reputed Truth which he aſſerted. Soon after the *Papal* Hierarchy was eſtabliſhed, chiefly by Means of the Ignorance and well-manag'd Superſtition of the conquering *Barbarians*. Then Learning, ſuch as it was, was confined to the Convents, and no Sin ſo zealouſly reprov'd and puniſhed in the People as the Sin of *knowing too much*. Men of Parts were every where liſted to ſupport a pretended Infallibility, and Reaſon was brib'd to vote in Favour of its two greateſt Adverſaries, Ignorance and implicit Credulity. At laſt, the *Reformation* commenc'd; Ignorance and Credulity grew out of Reputation, and a generous Senſe of Liberty began to revive. But the curious and inquiſitive Part of Mankind, too timorous at firſt in the Uſe of the Liberty they had gain'd, inſtead of taking their own Meaſures in the Search of Truth, were careful only to reſtore the ancient Learning, and condemn'd themſelves to dig in the Rubbiſh of Antiquity. By this Means they gave a Reſurrection to an Infinity of Opinions, which perhaps had better lain buried as before; and 'tis but of late that People have made an impartial Uſe of their Reaſon, and introduc'd a ſort of *Free Philoſophy*, which yields a better Proſpect of Succeſs than ever.

CHAP. II.

BY what has been obſerved, it appears, that the ill Succeſs, both of *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, in Enquiries of this Nature, was chiefly owing to their too great Affectation of ſome of the *Grecian* Sects; of whoſe Methods, though we could have given no Account from Hiſtory, yet we might have found ſuf-

ſufficient to have produc'd in us no great Opinion of their Diſcoveries by the Idea *Cicero* gives us of their divine Philoſophy in his Book *De Natura Deorum*.

'Tis the general Obſervation of that learned *Roman*, that nothing can be imagined ſo ſilly and ridiculous which has not found a Patron among thoſe Philoſophers. And though they managed ſome of their Proofs of the Exiſtence of a God with ſufficient Evidence, yet when they came to treat of his Nature, he aſſures us he found them ſo abſurd and various, that he thought it a fruitleſs Labour to reckon up their Opinions. For, it ſeems, they were many of them ſo fond of Variety, that they had too little Regard for Truth or Probability; and were ſo careful to diſagree from each other, that they ſometimes neglected to be conſiſtent with themſelves. Which Humour of Novelty and Contradiction has no leſs diſcover'd itſelf on other Occaſions, but eſpecially in their Diſputes concerning the material Principle of the Univerſe, and concerning the *ſummum Bonum*, or ſupreme Good.

How malignant an Influence thoſe Diſſentions have had on an Age, which is ſtill too generally inclin'd to limit the utmoſt Extent of Science by the Opinions of the Ancients, is evident. Multitudes are tempted to doubt of, and not a few to disbelieve what appears to have been ſo little underſtood by thoſe mighty Pretenders. And even ſuch who profeſs a confirm'd and ſettled Perſuaſion of the Exiſtence of a God, are yet, for the moſt Part, diſpoſed to lay aſide all Enquiries into the Perfections of his Nature, as Things entirely above their Sphere and Capacity.

Yet, leſt the Underſtandings of Men ſhould appear with leſs Variety than in former Ages, we have another Sett of Gentlemen devoted to the *Carteſian Metaphyſicks*, who would perſuade us, that the Deity is the plaineſt and moſt evident Thing in Nature.

That every Man brings into the World an *innate Idea* of a God, or a Confutation of Atheiſm, as it were, engraven on his own Mind. And that if we have not from thence a ſufficiently clear and diſtinct Knowledge of our Maker, 'tis not for Want of Light and Perſpicuity in the Object, but through a wilful Blindneſs, and the moſt culpable Inadvertency in ourſelves.

As for the Gentlemen of the former Perſuaſion, it would, I conceive, be to little Purpoſe to go about to convince them of the Poſſibility of a ſatisfactory Knowledge of the Deity by Arguments, unleſs we could make the Experiment, and convince them by the Succeſs of the following Eſſay.

And as for the latter Sort, I perſuade my ſelf, it would be alike impertinent, in this Place, to ſpend Time in arguing againſt their pretended *innate Idea*, when the whole ſucceeding Diſcourſe will, 'tis hoped, be the beſt Confutation of it. For if it can be made appear, that God has given us the Ability of acquiring a ſufficient Knowledge of Himſelf in the Way of Reaſoning, it will, 'tis conceiv'd, be abundantly clear, how unneceſſary it is to ſuppoſe any ſuch *Epieurean Prolepſis*, or Anticipation of the Uſe of Reaſon, as is imply'd by the Opinion of an *innate Idea*. For as the late excellent Mr. *Locke* obſerved, *'twere impertinent to imagine the Ideas of Colours to be innate in any Being to whom God has given Sight.*

Nor ought it to be objected, that becauſe ſo many make ſo little Uſe of their Faculties, therefore we muſt have Recourſe to an innate Idea, if we pretend to account for the Univerſality of the Belief of a God. For admitting the Idea of a Divine Being to be as univerſal as they ſuppoſe, how ſhall we be aſſur'd, that this ſuppos'd Univerſality is not owing to Tradition? As this Negative is impoſſible to be prov'd, ſo, on the contrary, it ſeems no difficult

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Matter to make appear from the Testimony of former Ages, that there has actually been an ancient immemorial Tradition of the Formation of the World by a beneficent, wise, and most powerful Being: Which Tradition alone was sufficient to diffuse the Principles of Religion as universally as the pretended innate Idea is conceiv'd to have done.

CHAP. III.

THOUGH the Authority of Tradition, if it appears to have been perpetual and uninterrupted, will ever have its due Weight with all considering Men, yet when a Thing is capable of other Proof, nothing is so grateful and convictive as the immediate Testimony of Reason. Wherefore, tho' by the Means of Education and Example, we have receiv'd a general traditional Notion of the Existence and Perfections of the Deity, and of the Precepts and Obligations of Religion, yet 'tis very fit, that in a Matter of so great Concern, we should make use of such Assistance as Reason is capable of yielding us. This is what I shall now attempt to do.

Tho' some too nice * *Metaphysicians* have of late been teaching us to doubt of the very fundamental Principles of all Certainty, yet I persuade my self, none that is not dispos'd to trifle, will expect greater Evidence of any thing, than what immediately arises from the *Internal Consciousness* which we have of our own Existence, and the *concurrent Testimony of our external Senses.*

Now the Existence of a God, or *most perfect Being*, is a most direct and natural Consequence of that Consciousness which we have of our own Existence.

This may appear from the following Reflections.

* *Des Cartes* and his Followers.

As we have infallible Evidence that we ourſelves are, ſo from thence we may have no leſs Aſſurance that ſomething has ever been. For ſuppoſing that there once was nothing at all exiſting, we may be as ſure that neither we, nor any other Being, could at all have been, as either that Nothing could not produce Something, or that Something could not produce itſelf.

'Twas therefore never doubted by any ſober Reaſoner, that ſome Being eternally was. The only Queſtion has been concerning the Nature of an Eternal Being; which to diſcover will be the chief Deſign of the enſuing Enquiry.

Now, in the firſt Place 'tis evident, that an eternal Being was a *neceſſary* Being. The Reaſon is, becauſe it was without Beginning. For 'tis as certain, that a Being which was without Beginning was neceſſary, as that there never was any Poſſibility of its not having been.

In the next Place, 'tis clear not only that an *original* eternal Being was neceſſary, or ſuch as could not but have been; but likewiſe that it was an *abſolutely neceſſary* Being, which by Conſequence muſt ever continue to be.

By an *abſolutely neceſſary Being*, I underſtand ſuch a Being as ever contain'd a neceſſary *Reaſon* of its own Exiſtence in its very Nature, without the leaſt Dependence either on the free Election of its own Will, or on the Cauſality of any other Being.

That there could be no other Being on whoſe Cauſality ſuch an eternal or neceſſary Being could depend, is ſelf-evident. And that the free Election of its own Will could be no Reaſon of its neceſſary Exiſtence, is no leſs manifeſt. Conſequently, the Reaſon of its neceſſary Exiſtence muſt have been either included in its very Nature, or elſe there muſt have been no Reaſon of it at all; which is abſurd. But to include a neceſſary *Reaſon* of its Exiſtence in

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its very Nature, without the leaſt Dependence either on its own free Will, or on the Cauſality of any other Being, is (as we before obſerv'd) to be abſolutely neceſſary.

'Tis therefore clear, both that there is an eternal independent Being, and that ſuch a Being cannot but be abſolutely neceſſary. Our next Attempt muſt be to gain a more particular Knowledge of ſuch a Being. To which End, it is conceiv'd, we need only to conſider the Nature and Import of an *abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence*.

In the general, it muſt, I think, be confeſs'd, that there is ſomething in the very Idea of an abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence which ſtrikes a conſiderate Mind, and diſpoſes it to believe that the Reaſon of ſuch Neceſſity muſt be ſomewhat very wonderful: Therefore the moſt natural, as well as the moſt probable Method of acquiring a more particular Knowledge of an abſolutely neceſſary Being, is to make ſome Enquiry into that *Reaſon* of neceſſary Exiſtence, which we obſerv'd it to include and poſſeſs: To which End I ſhall proceed by Steps.

Firſt, 'Tis, I conceive, demonſtrable, that the Reaſon of an abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence, can import no leſs than *All actual Perfection*; or that there is no Kind or Degree of Perfection which is not included in the Nature of an abſolutely neceſſary Being. For though we ſhould ſuppoſe *divers* abſolutely neceſſary Beings, yet it would be abſurd to imagine any one of them ſhould neceſſarily poſſeſs either more or greater Perfection than another; they being equally neceſſary or independent in Exiſtence, and therefore not neceſſarily unequal in any Reſpect. And if not neceſſarily unequal, they could not but be neceſſarily equal. For the Inequality, if any, muſt have been abſolutely neceſſary. But if we ſuppoſe but *One* abſolutely neceſſary or independent Being, 'twill be yet more evident, that

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That Being muſt poſſeſs all actual Perfection, whether we conceive it (with the Atheiſt) to be the only Being, or (with the Theiſt) to be the Author of all other Beings. For that the Only Being muſt poſſeſs all actual Perfection, is no leſs than ſelf-evident; and that the Author of all other Beings can himſelf want nothing of that Perfection which he has communicated to his Effects, is undeniable.

Again, 'tis, I conceive, equally certain, that the Reaſon of an abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence can import no leſs than *all poſſible Perfection*; and by Conſequence, that no imaginable Acceſſion of any Sort could have render'd an abſolutely neceſſary Being more perfect than it actually is.

My Argument is this.

Nothing exiſts with an abſolute or independent Neceſſity, but ſuch a Being whoſe Nature abſolutely excludes the very Poſſibility of ceaſing to be.

But no Nature can abſolutely exclude the very Poſſibility of ceaſing to be, unleſs it abſolutely excludes all poſſible Imperfection. The Reaſon is, becauſe where-ever any Imperfection is, there it can be no abſolute Impoſſibility (or Contradiction) for any other (even the utmoſt) Imperfection to be; and conſequently there may be a Poſſibility of ceaſing to be; which is the utmoſt Imperfection.

Therefore, ſince the very Nature of an abſolutely neceſſary Being abſolutely excludes the Poſſibility of ceaſing to be, it can be for no other Reaſon, than becauſe it abſolutely excludes all poſſible Imperfection.

But that Being whoſe Nature abſolutely excludes all poſſible Imperfection, cannot but poſſeſs or include all poſſible Perfection. The Reaſon, is, becauſe the Want or Abſence of any poſſible Perfection is an Imperfection.

Thus, in Oppoſition to the Aſſertors of the Eternity of *Matter* or Body, it may be firmly demonſtra-

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ted to be and to have been eternally an abſolute Impoſſibility or Contradiction, that an original eternal Being ſhould be other than moſt perfect, (which Matter, we are ſure, is not) from the abſolute Inconſiſtence that there is between the abſolute Neceſſity of its Exiſtence, and the leaſt poſſible Imperfection.

CHAP. IV.

BEING advanced thus far, we may, with the greateſt Aſſurance, affirm that there is a GOD, i. e. *an eternal, independent, abſolutely neceſſary, and moſt perfect Being.* Of this, I think, there can be no doubt, whatever Doubt there may be with Reference to ſome particular Notions of his Perfection.

In order to a more particular Diſcovery of the Nature of a Being, which we are aſſured poſſeſſes the higheſt poſſible Perfection, it will be neceſſary carefully to conſider the general Idea of *Perfection.* For this, though perhaps not uſually conſider'd as it deſerves, is the Standard whereby we are to form our particular Ideas of the Nature of an eternal independent Being in the enſuing Enquiry.

The Word *Perfect*, was firſt uſed with Reference to artificial Things, as ſignifying that which was finiſh'd, or fully ſuited to the End for which it was deſign'd by the Artiſt. But afterwards, we find it was adopted by the Philoſophers, and uſed in more than one Senſe in their Reaſonings on Natural and Metaphyſical Subjects.

In the general, that is ſaid by Philoſophers to be perfect, which contains whatever is included in the Idea which they have of its Nature. They conceive a Thing to be thus perfect, ſometimes in an *abſolute*,

abſolute, ſometimes in a *relative* Senſe. In the *abſolute* Senſe, that only, ſay they, is *perfect*, whoſe Nature comprehends an abſolutely infinite Number of Kinds and Degrees of Perfection. And in this Senſe an eternal independent Nature is uſually ſaid to be perfect. In the *relative* Senſe, any Being is denominated *perfect*, which wants nothing of that which belongs to its particular Nature.

But whether there is in reality any ſuch Thing as an *abſolute Perfection* in the Senſe before explain'd, may well deſerve our Enquiry.

That an eternal independent Nature cannot but have ever been moſt abſolute, or excluſive of any proper Cauſe, is, it is confeſs'd, no leſs than ſelf-evident. By Conſequence, the Perfection which is neceſſary to ſuch a Nature, muſt be allow'd to be moſt abſolute in the ſame Senſe. Yet it is humbly conceiv'd, this doth not hinder but that the utmoſt poſſible Perfection may not be abſolute in the other Senſe; or that it may not conſiſt in an abſolutely infinite Number of Kinds and Degrees, but in an immutable determinate Relation to all capable Objects. To aſſert that it conſiſts in an abſolutely infinite Number of Kinds and Degrees, is, I conceive, to obſcure its Idea by unneceſſary and inexplicable Difficulties; for as much as the Idea of the utmoſt poſſible Perfection cannot poſſibly be form'd with an abſolute Infinity of Number, but may very well be form'd without it.

This will eaſily appear from the Nature of *Number*.

If any Number (or Arithmetical Quantity) is abſolutely or infinitely great, it can be for no other Reaſon, than becauſe 'tis abſolutely (or in its very Nature) incapable of Increaſe, without an abſolute Contradiction. But the very Nature of all Quantity infers, on the contrary, a Neceſſity of Increaſe, on the Suppoſition of the leaſt Addition. For all

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Quantities (being of the ſame general Nature) muſt ſeverally bear a Proportion to each other. *For Example*, That can be no Unit which, by the Addition of one Unit, will not become two. And by Parity of Reaſon, that is no Million which, by the Addition but of a ſingle Unit, will not increaſe to the Greatneſs of a Million and an Unit. For if it be but a Million after the Addition of the Unit, 'tis plain, it muſt before that Addition, have been leſs than a Million by an Unit. The like may be ſaid of all Quantity. But of this more at large hereafter.

Theſe Reflections, which are ſelf-evident, (or as plain as that three and two make five) are entirely deſtructive of the Suppoſition of an *abſolute* Perfection conſiſting in an *abſolutely infinite* Number of Kinds and Degrees. Whereas, on the contrary, nothing can be more eaſy and intelligible than the Notion of Perfection in the *relative* and *determinate* Senſe. For in this Senſe, Perfection is plainly the ſame with *Sufficiency*. According to which Notion of it, 'tis evident, that as among Inferior Beings, that only can be ſaid to be perfect in its Kind, which poſſeſſes whatever is neceſſary to qualify it for attaining its particular End; ſo only ſuch a Being can poſſeſs the utmoſt poſſible Perfection as is all-ſufficient, or naturally and independently qualified for all fit and ſuitable Ends.

To explain this general Concluſion by particular Inſtances. The Perfection of effective Power may very well conſiſt in its bearing an immutable Relation of Proportionateneſs to all fit and capable Objects of ſuch Power in general, or in its being independently ſufficient to effect or produce whatever is fit, and implies not a Contradiction: For to ſuch Power, though we ſhould imagine farther Degrees to be addible, yet ſince they would be in vain, or to no Purpoſe, they could not render it more perfect

ſect by their Acceſſion. The like may be ſaid of *Wiſdom*, *Knowledge*, or any other Powers or Properties; the Eſtimate of whoſe Perfection is, it is conceiv'd, no otherwiſe to be made than with relation to their Objects either actual or poſſible. *

And as the Perfection of *Properties* or *Attributes* is to be underſtood to conſiſt in a Relation of Proportionateneſs to all ſuitable and capable Objects, ſo the Perfection of *Subſtance*, (however we may conceive it) muſt, it ſeems, conſiſt in a like Relation to its Properties. And thus, that muſt be the moſt perfect Subſtance which is the neceſſary Subject of the moſt excellent and perfect Properties.

CHAP. V.

THE Neceſſity with which an original eternal Being exiſts, is, it ſeems, the Source of all the Knowledge we are directly capable of acquiring of its Nature. Therefore, ſince the Diſcovery of one Property of that Neceſſity (*viz.* its *Abſoluteneſs*) has already led us to the Knowledge of the Supreme Perfection or All-ſufficiency of ſuch a Being, it may not be amiſs, before we proceed to a particular Conſideration of that Perfection, to enquire what other Property of original Neceſſity is diſcoverable by us.

When we reflect on the Neceſſity with which ſomething ever exiſted, we find, that next to its *Abſoluteneſs*, or *Independence*, nothing is more obvious to our Thoughts than its *Unity*.

That the mention'd Neceſſity of an original Being was *One* as well as Abſolute, is certain, becauſe the internal Reaſon of it was *uniform*, and therefore not neceſſary to more than one Being.

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* See Mr. *Locke* in the Beg. of his Chap. of *Infinity*.

To make this appear we need only to reflect, that though Something ever exiſted without a Cauſe, yet Nothing could exiſt without a *Reaſon* of its Exiſtence; and likewiſe that the Reaſon of the Exiſtence and abſolute Neceſſity of an eternal uncaus'd Being was ever included in its own Nature: Which Reaſon of abſolutely neceſſary Exiſtence, we have proved to be the utmoſt poſſible Perfection.

Now, that Perfection, which is the internal Reaſon of abſolutely neceſſary Exiſtence, is, and ever was uniform, and capable of exiſting in one and the ſame Being, and that therefore it could not be the abſolutely neceſſary Reaſon of the Exiſtence of more than one Being as its Subject, is certain. For there is no Inconſiſtence or Contrariety in Perfection. Perfection is only of Good; of Evil there is no Perfection; for Evil conſiſts in Defect. Therefore an *Oromaſdes* and *Arimanius* (which ſome have imagin'd to be two eternal Beings, who were the neceſſary Principles of Good and Evil) can have no Place in the Nature of Things.

It cannot indeed be denied, that the general Notion of Perfection includes Variety of Ideas, ſuch as *Wiſdom*, *Power*, *&c.* But then, this Variety, we may be aſſur'd, is uniform and conſiſtent, and conſequently could be no abſolutely neceſſary Reaſon of the Exiſtence of more than one eternal Being. Therefore to deify an *Apollo*, and an *Hercules*, or to make diſtinct Deities of *Wiſdom* and *Power*, was to attempt to divide that Supreme Perfection, which was ever One and Undivided.

The Sum of the Argument is this:

Every Thing that exiſts muſt have a *Reaſon* (if not a *Cauſe*) of its Exiſtence.

The Reaſon of the Exiſtence of an eternal, abſolutely neceſſary Being, is contained in its very Nature,

ture, and is (as was proved) no leſs than the *utmoſt poſſible Perfection.*

Perfection is uniform, *i. e.* all poſſible Perfections agree in one common uniform Nature, or they agree in the general Nature and Notion of *Goodneſs*; which admits of no Inconſiſtence or Contrariety.

Since all poſſible Perfections agree in one common Nature, which admits of no Inconſiſtence or Contrariety, they could not neceſſarily require more than one original Subject; (or which is the ſame) they could not be an abſolutely neceſſary Reaſon of the Exiſtence of more than one eternal abſolutely neceſſary Being.

Therefore to ſuppoſe more than one eternal abſolutely neceſſary Being, is to ſuppoſe abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence, without an abſolutely neceſſary Reaſon of it: Which is no leſs an Abſurdity, than it would be to ſuppoſe an Effect without a Cauſe.

The Reſult of the whole is, that there is but one eternal abſolute Neceſſity included in and founded on the utmoſt Perfection, and by Conſequence but one eternal abſolutely neceſſary Being, who is the Subject in which alone all poſſible Perfections and Degrees of Perfection are united, and from which all communicated Perfection flows.

CHAP. VI.

BY diſcovering the Supreme Perfection of the one eternal independent Being in the general, we have laid a firm Foundation for ſome more particular Knowledge of that Super-eminent Nature. For ſince eternal abſolute Neceſſity, being founded on Perfection, could not but admit of all the Variety included in the Nature of Perfection; as we cannot but aſcribe to the eternal and moſt perfect Being, whatever Excellencies we are acquainted with,

with, ſo we are obliged to believe it may poſſeſs many others of which we have no Ideas. For certainly we need not imagine either our Natures or our Acquaintance with the World to be ſuch, as to render our Ideas the adequate Meaſures of the Supreme Perfection. The utmoſt we are able to do, is to conſider what Ideas compoſe the general Notion we have of Perfection, and in what Manner they are to be conceiv'd with reference to that Being which we are aſſured poſſeſſes the utmoſt poſſible Perfection.

But before we proceed to produce a Scheme of the particular Ideas which make up our general Notion of Perfection, it muſt be obſerv'd, that Perfection or Sufficiency may be conſider'd, either with reference to the Being to which it belongs, or with reſpect to other Beings: Which will occaſion a twofold Diſtribution of our Ideas of the Supreme or Divine Perfection.

I. Our Ideas of the Divine Perfection with reference to the Deity Himſelf, (or his *Self-ſufficiency*) are of two Sorts, *viz.* either *Primary* or *Secondary*. Of the former Sort are,

1. *Self-activity*, or Vital Power.

2. *Intelligence*, or Self-Conſciouſneſs.

3. *Liberty*, or a free ſelf-determining Power with regard to what is term'd External Action; in which it is the leading or firſt moving Principle.

Theſe two laſt Ideas repreſent Powers which muſt be conceiv'd as founded on the vital Power or Self-activity.

'Tis, I confeſs, the uſual Opinion, that the Divine Effective Power, in its full Latitude, is nothing elſe but a Power of Willing; or that to *will* and to *effect* are, with regard to the Deity, the very ſame. But with all due Submiſſion, 'tis conceiv'd, that the Power of Willing, as it regards what is call'd External Action, includes an Ability not only of chu-

ſing a particular Act, but likewiſe of determining ſome other Power to the Execution of it. And though we may, in certain Caſes, have no other Idea of the Manner of acting diſtinct from that of pure Willing or Chuſing, yet Modeſty will teach us to believe there may be more and more perfect Manners of Acting than we (who derive all our Ideas of Power from imperfect Agents) are acquainted with. And ſo much the rather, ſince our Idea of a mere Power of Willing or Chuſing is too narrow to repreſent the Divine Effective Power; and conſequently the Uſe of the Word *Will*, ſo as to ſignify either that Power or its Action, rather obſcures than explains the Matter. For to us 'tis inconceivable how a pure Act of the Will can immediately produce or effect any thing. And accordingly *Vanini* reckons it among the Abſurdities which he ſays neceſſarily attend the Belief of a God, that we muſt, as uſual, aſſert his Will and effective Power to be the ſame; but to proceed.

From theſe three primary Ideas of the Divine Perfection conſider'd with regard to the Deity himſelf, reſult three others, which may be term'd *Secondary*.

1. *Spirituality*. Which is a complex Idea including the three primary ones.

2. *Conſtancy*, or Immutability. An Idea reſulting from that of *Spirituality* conſider'd as *Perfect*.

3. *Happineſs*. An Idea neceſſarily reſulting from the two laſt mentioned, and conſtituting, together with them, our Idea of the moſt perfect Being conſider'd as he is in Himſelf.

II. The *Divine Perfection* or Sufficiency with regard to other Beings, may likewiſe be conſider'd in a twofold Reſpect; with relation to Beings either merely *poſſible* or *actually exiſtent*. In the former Reſpect it yields us three other Ideas, *viz.*

1. *Omni-*

1. *Omnipotence* or Almighty Power. An Idea reſulting chiefly from that of *Self-activity*.

2. *Wiſdom*. Which Idea we derive from the Conſideration of the Divine *Intelligence*.

3. *Omniſcience*, or *Perfect Knowledge*. An Idea form'd chiefly by the Conſideration of the Divine *Liberty*.

All theſe Ideas repreſent ſuch Perfections as are uſually term'd *natural*, as oppoſed to *moral*.

Correſpondently to theſe three Ideas of the Divine Sufficiency with regard to other Beings conſider'd as merely poſſible, there are three others which we derive from our conſidering it with regard to other Beings as actually exiſtent, *viz.*

1. *Goodneſs* or *Benevolence*. An Idea chiefly reſulting from the Conſideration of the free Effects of *Omnipotence* in the *Creation* and *Suſtentation* of the Univerſe.

2. *Government*. An Idea derived from our View both of the beautiful Order of the inanimate Parts of the World, and of the regular Frame and Management of the Irrational and Intelligent: Which are particularly conſider'd as the Effects of Divine *Wiſdom*. To this Idea are reducible thoſe of *Holineſs*, *Mercy*, *Juſtice*, and *Veracity*; as being Ideas derived from the Conſideration of the Exerciſe of the Divine Wiſdom in governing the World.

3. *Providence*, ſtrictly ſo call'd. Which Idea we owe moſt immediately to the Exerciſe of *Omniſcience*. I ſay moſt immediately; for the Wiſdom and Power of the Eternal Being will appear to be likewiſe moſt brightly diſplay'd in all his Acts of Providence.

Theſe three laſt Ideas, with whatever Ideas they may include, denote no particular Perfections of the Divine Nature, but are Notions form'd in our Minds by the Conſideration of the Exerciſe of the Divine Perfections with regard to the Creatures.

And these are the Ideas which represent such Attributes as are usually called *moral ones*.

From these three Ideas it is that we derive our Idea of the Divine *Omnipresence*; tho' most immediately from the first, *viz.* that of the Divine *Goodness* in creating and sustaining the World.

CHAP. VII.

HAVING thus taken a View of our Ideas of the Supreme or Divine Perfection in such Order as they seem most naturally either to be comprehended in or to be deduced from the general Idea of Perfection, we may now proceed to consider them distinctly, and to the general Demonstration may add the Proofs of each in particular: Which will likewise be so many additional Proofs of the Existence of a God.

I. The first Idea included in our general Notion of Perfection, we observ'd to be *Self-activity*. Now, that the Eternal Being is vitally and independently active, appears not only from the general Notion or Idea of his Perfection, but had we form'd no such general Idea, would have been abundantly evident from the *Motion* we observe in the World.

If we believe our Senses, we cannot doubt of the Reality of Motion. But 'tis undeniable that the Motion we are sensible of, must have been either absolutely *uncaus'd*, or if caus'd, it must have been the *Effect* either of eternal Matter, or else of some eternal immaterial self-active Principle.

If absolutely *uncaus'd*, it must have been an eternal natural Property either of All Matter, or at least of some particular Portion or Portions of Matter.

If it was the *Effect* of *Eternal Matter*, it must have been either Temporal (or with Beginning,) or Eternal (or without Beginning.) If *Temporal*, it must

muſt have been begun by the Action of ſome free or indetermin'd elective Principle, eſſential either to the whole Maſs of Matter, or at leaſt to ſome particular Portion or Portions of it. If *Eternal*, it muſt have proceeded either from ſome Action of Matter bent towards ſome particular Point or Points, or elſe from ſome Action that was indifferent to every Side. All theſe Hypotheſes will be comprehended and explained under the following Propoſitions.

1. *The Motion we perceive in the World was not abſolutely uncaus'd, or an eternal natural Property either of all Matter, or of any of its Parts.*

By *Matter*, or *Body*, I underſtand the Subſtance of which all the Parts of the viſible Univerſe conſiſt. Theſe we know to be made up of a Multitude of ſolid, moveable, and diviſible Particles, having (as well as the greater Parts) an Aptitude to communicate Motion by Impulſe. But whether any other Properties belong either to the whole Maſs of Matter, or to any of its Parts, is diſputed.

As for *Motion*, 'tis a ſimple Idea, and therefore neither needs nor admits Explanation.

That Motion was not abſolutely uncaus'd, or an eternal natural Property of *All Matter*, may appear from the following Reflexions.

Firſt, It has been already prov'd, that a Being that was eternal and abſolutely uncaus'd, muſt have been abſolutely neceſſary, or of ſuch a Nature as render'd it an abſolute Contradiction for it to ceaſe to be. Now 'tis clear, that this both was and is equally true of whatever is poſitive and natural to ſuch a Being; for as much as it cannot but *be* with the very ſame Neceſſity as is the Being to which it belongs. If then both the Motion of Matter and its Direction were natural to it and abſolutely uncaus'd, it clearly follows that they ever had and ever will have an abſolutely neceſſary Connection with Matter. Whereas on the contrary, though it

ſhould be admitted that not a Particle in the Univerſe is abſolutely at Reſt, yet 'tis certain that Matter and Motion, and Motion and its particular Direction, have no ſuch neceſſary or eſſential Connection with each other, as will be ſhewn under the third Propoſition.

Again, if Motion was abſolutely uncaus'd, or an eternal abſolutely neceſſary natural Property of All Matter, it follows that it was neceſſary to every Particle of Matter in the ſame Degree without any Variety. For ſince there is nothing in Nature capable of inferring any Variety in original Neceſſity, but only Perfection, on which it was founded, and which likewiſe infers its Unity, 'tis clear that all the Particles of Matter, and their Properties, if ſuppos'd to have been uncaus'd, and to have exiſted by a Neceſſity not founded on Perfection, (which Neceſſity muſt have been not only One but abſolutely Simple) muſt be aſſerted to have been without the leaſt Variety.

But if Motion was neceſſary to every Particle of Matter in the ſame Degree without the leaſt Variety, 'tis clear that every Particle muſt have moved alike. Both comparative Reſt and Increaſe of Velocity muſt have been equally impoſſible. A conſtant Uniformity muſt have diſplay'd itſelf throughout univerſal Nature; and there could have been no Difference between the Motion of a Mote or Duſt in the Sun beams and that of a Whirlwind.

And then as for the latter Part of this Propoſition, *viz. That Motion was no eternal natural Property of any particular Part or Parts of Matter*; 'tis no leſs manifeſt. For ſince original Neceſſity, whether conceiv'd as founded on Perfection or not, muſt, as we juſt now obſerv'd, be ſuppos'd to have been ever *one*, it follows, that if the Parts and Properties of Matter exiſted by one and the ſame Neceſſity, 'tis abſurd to imagine any of thoſe Parts to have neceſſarily poſſeſs'd a Property which another

Part

Part as neceſſarily wanted. For this is to conceive the one eternal Neceſſity to have been different, even while it is ſuppoſed to have been the ſame.

2. *Motion was not a temporal Effect produced by eternal Matter by virtue of any free elective Principle eſſential either to the whole Maſs of Matter, or to any of its Parts.*

That ſuch a free Principle of Action (if any ſuch) muſt have been eſſential to all Matter, or an abſolutely neceſſary Property of the whole Maſs, is manifeſt from the Principles already eſtabliſh'd. For the one abſolute eternal Neceſſity (however conceiv'd) could admit of no Difference of Properties in different Parts of Matter. This, by the Way, deſtroys the Suppoſition of an eternal material *Soul of the World.*

But though ſome Atheiſtical Materialiſts have thought fit to beſtow the Property of Intelligence either on the whole Maſs of Matter (as did *Spinoza*,) or on every diſtinct Particle of it (as Mr. *Hobbes* ſeems to have done,) yet none ever aſſerted either the Whole or any Part of it, to poſſeſs an eſſential Liberty or Freedom of Action; without which there could have been no Production or Beginning of Motion. And indeed, as we juſt now obſerv'd, had they been inclined to aſcribe Freedom of Action but to any one Part of Matter, they would have been obliged to aſcribe the ſame Freedom to all: Which had they done, they could not have fail'd of a Confutation from every Man's Experience.

3. *Motion was not an eternal Effect of Matter by virtue of any Action bent towards ſome particular Point or Points.*

That an eternal or neceſſary Action (if the Cauſe of Motion) could not but be invariably bent towards one particular Point, is clear. For ſince the Power from which the Action is ſuppoſed to have

eternally or neceſſarily proceeded, could not but act as well as exiſt with one and the ſame immutable Neceſſity, it follows that its Action could admit of no Difference or Change of Directions. This abſolutely deſtroys the *Chance* of *Epicurus*.

And though any Man ſhould ſuppoſe the imaginary eternal Matter to have been intelligent; yet this could have made no Difference. For if both the Action and its Direction were neceſſary or immutable, they could not but abſolutely exclude a ſelf-determining Power (or a Power of differently directing the Action) from their Subject; without which, Intelligence could effect nothing.

But I conceive 'tis ſufficiently demonſtrable, that there could be no ſuch thing as a proper eternal Effect of any Cauſe. For ſince whatever was eternal, was neceſſary; and ſince the Neceſſity with which an original eternal Being exiſted was perfectly one and uniform, it follows that it could not admit of ſuch an eternal or neceſſary Diſtinction as that of Cauſe and Effect. For whatever uniform Diſtinction or Variety was included in the Nature of Perfection, this we may be aſſured was not; both becauſe Liberty is a Perfection, and to be an Effect, or to be eſſentially dependent, is a great Imperfection.

Notwithſtanding this, ſome (who had no Notion of the Perfection of the original Being) have not fail'd to make Motion an eternal Effect of a ſuppos'd eternal Action of Matter immutably bent to deſcend, but with Variety of Inclinations or Directions. Such Action was the *Gravitation* of the *Epicureans:* Which we ſhall briefly conſider.

'Tis well known to have been the Opinion of *Epicurus*, and other ancient and modern Materialiſts, that every Atom or Particle of Matter neceſſarily or immutably poſſeſſes a certain determinate Gravity or Weight independent of any other Being; which

which Gravity, by its Action of Gravitation, they ſuppoſed to have been the eternal or neceſſary Cauſe of Motion; though at the ſame time they abſurdly imagin'd *Chance* to have been, as it were, the Director of Motion.

Concerning theſe Philoſophers, we may, in the firſt place, obſerve, that whatever Order they ſuppos'd between Gravitation and Motion as Cauſe and Effect, they yet conceiv'd them to have been both neceſſary. Conſequently, the Arguments produced under the firſt of theſe Propoſitions, againſt the Neceſſity of Motion, are of equal Force here. But becauſe the *Epicurean* Hypotheſis has formerly met with ſome Entertainment in the World, I ſhall give it a few Thoughts, and ſhall proceed to ſhew, in the firſt Place, that there is no ſuch Principle as Gravity immutably and independently inherent in Matter or Bodies.

'Tis, I take it, paſt all Doubt, not only that the Gravitation of Bodies ſituate *without* the Surface of the Earth, decreaſes with reſpect to the *Center* in Proportion to the *Increaſe* of their Diſtance from the *Surface*, but likewiſe that, on the contrary, the Gravitation of Bodies placed *within* the *Surface*, decreaſes, in the ſame Reſpect, according to the *Decreaſe* of their Diſtance from the Center. From which, and divers other Obſervations, it is allow'd to be ſufficiently clear.

Firſt, That there is a mutual Gravitation, or Tendency, not only of all the Parts of the Earth, but of the neareſt Heavenly Bodies; and by Conſequence, as far as our Obſervation reaches, of all the Parts of Matter towards each other.

Secondly, That the Gravitation of Bodies is either more or leſs in an exact Proportion to their own real Quantity, and to the Quantity and Diſtance of the Bodies toward which they tend.

How

How different this Gravitation is from that neceſſary Tendency to *deſcend*, which *Epicurus* beſtow'd on each of his Atoms, is evident.

According to theſe Principles, 'tis eaſy to conceive, that, contrary to the vulgar Opinion, ſuppoſing a Paſſage through the Diameter of the Earth, a Stone or other ponderous Body deſcending, would loſe of its Velocity, or Swiftneſs, in Proportion to its nearer Approach to the Center. And thus moving ſtill ſlower, according to the Decreaſe of its Gravitation towards the Center, it would at laſt remain without any further predominant Tendency towards any particular Point; as being ſurrounded by an equal Quantity of Matter on all Sides. The like would happen to any leſſer Body moving into the middle Space between two or more ſuch Bodies as our Earth, conſiſting of equal Quantities of Matter; or into the Space between two or more ſuch Bodies of unequal Quantities, fixed at a proportionable Inequality of Diſtance.

But if the Gravitation and Motion of Bodies be ſo variable through Variety of Situations, this is enough to demonſtrate them not to have been eternal or neceſſary Effects of any Principle independently inherent in every Atom or Particle of Matter (for as much as ſuch a Principle could not admit of Variety of Directions, but muſt have acted uniformly or alike in all Situations) but to be Effects entirely dependent on ſome other Cauſe.

But admitting (according to the *Epicurean* Hypotheſis) that Gravity was a neceſſary independent Property of every Atom; yet it may be affirmed impoſſible it ſhould have been the Cauſe of that Variety of Motions which we experience in Nature. For 'tis demonſtrable that the Principle and Laws of Gravitation (whatever they may be) ſince they muſt be allow'd, if eternal, to be uniform and invariable, could never have been ſubject to *Chance*, ſo as to have

have become the Cauſe of various and contrary Motions; ſuch as may be obſerv'd in the preſent Syſtem of Things. For Inſtance, the projectile Motions of divers of the great Bodies of the Univerſe, tending to deſcribe *Circles* or *Ellipſes*, and the Central Motions of their ſeveral Parts, tending always to *Streight Lines*.

4. *Motion was not an eternal Effect of Matter produced by virtue of any Action that was indifferent to every Side.*

That ſuch an indifferently determinable eternal Action cannot with Reaſon be ſuppoſed, even tho' Matter ſhould be ſuppoſed to be intelligent, is clear from the Uniformity, or Invariableneſs of eternal or neceſſary Action, already proved.

But ſuppoſing ſuch an eternal Action of Matter as was and is indifferent to every Side, (and ſuppoſing the Agent (with the *Epicurean* Atheiſt) to have been *unintelligent*) how could this have been the Cauſe of the Motion we experience in the World?

If we take a View of the Heavenly Bodies, we ſhall ſee with what an exact and conſtant Regularity they perform their reſpective Revolutions. Even the Motions of *Comets*, which, till of late, have ſeem'd the Extravagancies and Enormities of Nature, do now appear to be regular and reducible to ſuch an *Ellipſis* whoſe Sides approach very near a *Parabola*. And the ſeemingly confus'd Poſitions of the *Planets* may be ſufficiently accounted for from the different Wideneſs of their Orbits; in deſcribing which they all revolve the ſame Way with the greateſt Exactneſs. But among theſe, the *Moon*, the moſt expoſed to our View, is particularly remarkable; whoſe Revolutions about the Earth and her own *Axis* are ſo nicely adjuſted, that they are both performed in the ſame Compaſs of Time. By which admirable Harmony of the two Motions, it happens that ſhe always preſents the ſame Side to our

our Eyes, while one Motion continually turns her *from* the Earth, and the other *towards* it, in the ſame Proportion.

And ſhould we confine our Obſervation to the *Earth* which we inhabit, beſides the ſeveral Motions of the entire Globe (which are no leſs exact and regular) we may obſerve its ſeveral Parts, as if animated by one common Soul, conſtantly and uniformly tending towards one common Center. But ſuch Conſtancy and ſuch Uniformity are as abſolutely irreconcileable to the Opinion of a Principle of Motion which is unintelligent, and yet indifferent to every Side, as the former Inſtances of Variety and Contrariety (under the laſt Propoſition) are to that of a Principle of Motion invariably determin'd to one Side.

If, after all, any Man ſhould object, that perhaps Motion was neither abſolutely uncaus'd, nor yet the Effect of any active Principle eſſential to Matter, but a mere *Paſſion* communicated from one Part of Matter to another in an eternal Circulation, as *Hobbes* and *Spinoza* imagin'd, this is certainly the moſt unreaſonable Suppoſition of any.

To prove this Aſſertion, we ſhall not need to repeat what we obſerv'd when we ſhew'd the Impoſſibility of the Eternity of Motion. 'Twill be ſufficient to add this one Obſervation, *viz.* That in the Caſe of ſuch an eternal Circulation, there is neither any external Agent ſuppos'd, which might be the proper Cauſe of the Motion, nor any intrinſick Reaſon of it in the Bodies moved; but the Bodies are conceiv'd, in a manner purely paſſive, to transfer that Motion to each other, which none of them in particular either poſſeſs'd with an abſolute Neceſſity in its own Nature, or derived from the Power of any proper Agent whatſoever. But what is this but to ſuppoſe Motion to exiſt without either a proper Cauſe, or ſo much as a Reaſon of its Exiſtence; which is abſurd to the laſt Degree.

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If then the Motion of Matter be abſolutely unaccountable by any of theſe Hypotheſes, (which yet are all that the Enemies of Religion either have propoſed or can propoſe or imagine) 'tis manifeſt that Matter is no original ſelf-active Being, but that its Motion muſt have been begun by ſome Principle eſſentially diſtinct, or by ſome *immaterial Agent*, who is neceſſarily exiſtent, and, as ſuch, perfectly *ſelf-active*. Of the Notion of an immaterial Being, we ſhall treat particularly in the *Appendix*.

II. The next Conception contain'd in the general Idea of the eternal Being, conſider'd as He is in Himſelf, is *Intelligence* or *Self-conſciouſneſs*.

This Idea, as likewiſe the Idea of *Liberty*, or Free ſelf-determining Power, we are naturally led to by the Conſideration of the Idea of *Self-activity*. For Self-activity, or mere vital Power, could be no ſufficient Principle of beginning external Action without Self-conſciouſneſs and Self-determination, *i. e.* without both *Intelligence* and *Liberty*.

By *Intelligence*, as natural to the eternal Being, and as importing no more than Self-conſciouſneſs, is meant *a perfect Perception or Knowledge of his own moſt perfect Nature*.

That the eternal Being was naturally or neceſſarily a perceptive or ſelf-conſcious Being, will more fully appear from the following Reaſoning.

If Motion had a Beginning (as has been already demonſtrated) 'tis evident that the original Cauſe of Motion was a thinking perceptive Being; for as much as nothing could immediately qualify him to begin to act but a free ſelf-determining Principle included in his own Nature. For without ſuch a ſelf-determining Principle, if originally in any Reſpect unactive, he would neceſſarily or eſſentially have remained ſo. But Self-determination, which is the Reſult of ſuch a ſelf-determining Principle, could not be without a preceding *Perception* both of the

the Power of Acting, and of the Difference of Acts; ſince 'tis certain, that no Being can be ſaid freely (or without Neceſſitation) to determine a Power which it knows nothing of, to an Act of which it has no Perception. But Perception neceſſarily implies *Intelligence* or *Self-conſciouſneſs*.

III. Another Conception included in the general Idea of the Eternal Being in Himſelf conſider'd, is *Liberty*: By which is meant a *perfect Freedom of external Action*, or of ſuch Action as regards other Beings.

In the general Notion of Liberty is comprehended a Power both of chooſing and determining, exempt from all external irreſiſtible Force, and internal invincible Defects.

Our Idea of the Divine Liberty in particular we are directed to form (as was hinted before) by the Conſideration of the two preceding Ideas of the Divine Perfection. For as the Idea of perfect Self-activity excludes the Influence of all imaginable Force and Defects, ſo that of a perfect Intelligence not only includes a Power of Perceiving, but infers likewiſe a Power of Chooſing and Determining accordingly: Without which neither Self-activity nor Intelligence could be a ſufficient Principle of Action.

Thus, the Arguments by which we proved the Self-activity and Intelligence of the Eternal Being, are no leſs ſufficient Proofs of his Liberty: Which will ſave us the Pains of adding any thing here upon this Head.

But becauſe the Idea of Liberty admits of ſome accidental Variety, according to the Diverſity of its Subjects and their ſeveral States; and becauſe 'tis no ſmall Difficulty to determine how far its Notion may agree to particular Agents and Acts; we ſhall here attempt an Explanation: And in ſo doing we ſhall, as on other Occaſions, with all Submiſſion, take our own Meaſures, without following any Track

Track but that which we conceive is made by the Footſteps of Truth.

That we may the better apprehend the Nature of ſuch Liberty as is agreeable to the moſt perfect of Beings, it cannot be amiſs, firſt, to form a Notion of ſuch as may agree to our ſelves, as far as it regards external Action. To which End it will perhaps be neceſſary to diſtinguiſh the ſeveral Acts of our Minds with reference to Liberty of external Action, in their natural Order.

Firſt then, We perceive an Object, whether it be Thing or Action. Then we judge of its Agreeableneſs or Diſagreeableneſs, Fitneſs or Unfitneſs. Theſe are Acts of Underſtanding.

Then we either approve (or acquieſce in) our Judgment of it (*viz.* by an interveening Deliberation) or elſe diſapprove it. Theſe are mix'd Acts of the Underſtanding and Will.

In the next place, we either Chuſe or Refuſe, *i. e.* we either ſingle out the Object in order to Practice, or elſe we reject it. And *laſtly*, we either determine our Practice with reference to the Object, according to this Choice, or elſe we reſolve to remain unactive: Which are all pure Acts of the Will.

Hence it appears, that tho' every Free Act includes Choice, yet what we here call *Choice*, is that particular Act only whereby we ſingle out the Object for Practice.

By not well diſtinguiſhing theſe ſeveral Acts of the Mind, we are apt to bewilder our ſelves in our Enquiries into human Liberty; more eſpecially by our conſidering the Approbation and the Choice of the Object, as alſo the Choice of the Object, and the Determination of the Practice accordingly, as inſeparable.

Theſe Things being premiſed, we ſhall endeavour an Account of Human Liberty in the following Propoſitions; by which not only its Reality, but

but its Distinction from that of the Deity, will, 'tis conceiv'd, sufficiently appear.

1. *'Tis plain that no Being can be denominated a Free Agent, but what is furnish'd not only with a Power of Perceiving, Judging, and Chooſing, but likewiſe of Determining its conſequent Acts (or Practice) according to its Perception, Judgment, and Choice.*

2. *In order to the completing of Liberty or Freedom, 'tis neceſſary that the Perception, Judgment, and Choice, as well as the conſequent Acts, be exempt from the Immediate irreſiſtible Influence of any External Force.*

For though a Man can do whatever he wills or chooſes to do, yet is he not compleatly free, unleſs he be as free to will or chooſe as he is to practiſe.

3. *'Tis further requiſite to the compleating of Liberty, that the Perception, Judgment, Choice, and conſequent Acts, be exempt even from the Mediate, irreſiſtible Influence of any ſuch Force.* For 'tis certain that all theſe may be exempt from the *immediate Influence* of any Force, and yet may, at the ſame Inſtant, be neceſſitated. Thus, if a Perſon of a deprav'd Imagination chuſes to leap into a River, miſtaking it for a beautiful Meadow, none, I ſuppoſe, will ſay he was compleatly free; ſince 'tis clear his Perception and Judgment were under the remote Influence of an external Force, *viz.* of the original Cauſe of his Diſtemper. And thus, a Malefactor, who has ſeveral Sorts of Death propos'd to his Choice, though his Choice be ſo far free as not to be immediately fix'd to any one Sort, yet there is ſtill ſuch an external Force, as effectually, though remotely, determines both his Choice and Practice.

4. *Human Liberty can't yet be complete without a Freedom from the Invincible Byaſs of all internal mental Defects.* For though the Perception, Judgment, Choice, and conſequent Acts, be exempt from the mediate

mediate as well as immediate irreſiſtible Influence of any external Force, yet the Choice may be far from being completely free. Thus a Perſon of a mean Capacity, in a Caſe of Difficulty, wherein the *apparent Good* is clear and evident to Senſe, but the *real Good* is the Object of Reaſon only, and no otherwiſe to be diſcovered than by an accurate Search and laborious Deduction; though he be not ſubject to the Influence of any external Force, and though he deliberately chooſe and determine his Action to the apparent Good, yet can't be ſaid to have been completely free. For his Incapacity was as effectual an Impediment as an external Force could have been.

5. *The ſeveral Degrees of Liberty already mentioned, can't yet render Human Liberty complete, in our imperfect State and Circumſtances, without the Acceſſion of a Freedom of not Acting as well as of Acting, even after the cleareſt Perception, and the moſt deliberate and unbyaſs'd Choice.* For we find by Experience, that notwithſtanding all the Requiſites of Liberty, already mentioned, an imperfect Agent, like our ſelves, may be in ſuch a State that he can't be reputed completely free. Thus a Perſon ſuddenly ſeiz'd with a Palſy, and chuſing to remain where he is, though his Stay be voluntary, and the Reſult of ſuch a Perception, Choice, and Self-determination, as no Force nor any Impediment influenc'd; yet 'tis clear, that being Paralytick, he was not free to remove.

This makes it appear, that a Power of *Acting* or *not Acting*, even after Choice, (by virtue of another intervening Choice) is that which is moſt eſſential to human Liberty in our preſent State, which we ſhall prove to be a State of Tryal, and that our Liberty does not entirely conſiſt in a *Spontaneity*, or Voluntarineſs, as ſome imagin. For what is done voluntarily (or with Choice) may yet be as neceſſary, as

what is done with the greateſt Reluctance. The Choice may be irreſiſtibly determin'd by an external Force, or effectually influenc'd by an internal Impediment. And ſuppoſing it free, yet it can't alone denominate the Agent free; whoſe conſequent Action may ſtill be neceſſitated or determin'd by ſome external Agent. Nor can a free Choice, join'd with a Liberty of Determining and Executing that only which happens to be in our Power, when the contrary was naturally as much in our Power, denominate us free; for if ſo, the Paralytick we lately mention'd might as well be reputed free, as a Perſon who has the Uſe of his Limbs. There muſt therefore be a ſelf-determining Power capable of Acting or not Acting even after the cleareſt Perception and freeſt Choice, with reference to Things within the Capacities of Human Nature; *i. e.* there muſt ſtill be a Power of refuſing and chuſing anew, capable of determining the Practice, either by exerting or not exerting an Ability to act according to that Refuſal or Choice.

6. *Though a previous Determination and Neceſſity (as far as they extend) are ever inconſiſtent with Liberty, yet they are not always inconſiſtent with Perfection.* The Reaſon is, becauſe Liberty, or Indetermination, is not, in every Caſe, a Perfection; and becauſe Determination and Neceſſity may ſometimes proceed from Perfection. For Inſtance, though in the Caſes aforementioned, *viz.* either of an immediate or mediate Influence from ſomewhat extrinſical, or of internal Hindrance from Defects, the Determination and Neceſſity reſulting from thence are Proofs of the Imperfection of the Subject, yet there is another Neceſſity in all intelligent Beings, proceeding from none of theſe Cauſes, but purely from the greater or leſſer Perfection of their Natures: And by Conſequence, an abſolute Freedom from ſuch Neceſſity (was it poſſible) would be an Imperfection.

fection. Thus, when I reflect upon what passes in my own Mind, I can't but observe a necessary Inclination to my own proper Good or Benefit in the general (as the End of all my Actions;) and when I set my self to consider any Good or Evil in particular, in order to obtain the one, or avoid the other, I find (if my Capacity and Means of Information be sufficient) I can't but necessarily judge of it as it is in Reality.

That such Necessity as is included in these Instances is no Imperfection, but rather a great Perfection, is, I think, too clear to be doubted. For 'tis the unavoidable Result of the Exercise of Reason; which is questionless a Perfection. And notwithstanding such Necessity, yet the antecedent Power we are conscious we have, in all ordinary Cases, either of determining or not determining our Thoughts to the Consideration of any particular Object in order to Practice, join'd with a subsequent Power of deliberating, and sometimes varying our Judgment in Cases not self-evident, as well as of suspending and varying our Approbation, Choice and Practice, even after the exactest Deliberation and truest Judgment, will sufficiently prove, that our Actions are under no universal fatal Determination, either from the Objects that affect us, or from any other Cause. I say we are conscious of these Powers within our selves. For I think I may appeal to any considering Man, whether he be not in all ordinary Cases, sensible of an Ability of darting his Thoughts upon any particular Object, even antecedently to any Deliberation; and then, whether after Deliberation about particular Objects, he can't reassume his Deliberation, and sometimes vary his Judgment; and whether, after the clearest Judgment, and most deliberate Choice of particular Things or Actions, he be not still conscious of a Power of suspending his Practice, of reassuming the Consideration of the Objects when-

ever he pleaſes, or of immediately chuſing and practiſing the contrary. But we have no clearer Proof, even of our Exiſtence, than Conſciouſneſs: And I conceive we need not expect greater Evidence of any Thing, than we have of our Exiſtence. So that if we duly reflect, we can't but find enough in our own Minds to convince us, that the proper Spring of Action is within our ſelves, and capable of exerting itſelf by its own native Force, though uſually excited and ſometimes determined by Things without us.

From what has been obſerv'd, it is manifeſt, that our Notion of Human Liberty, in the preſent State, is then only complete, when it includes a ſufficient Perception and a Judgment determin'd only by the Nature and Circumſtances of the Object, without the irreſiſtible Influence either of external Force or internal Defects; preceded by an indetermin'd Ability of conſidering and deliberating, and follow'd by a like indetermin'd Ability either of approving or not approving, chuſing or not chuſing, acting or not acting accordingly.

This Deſcription of human Liberty reflects ſome Light upon the Nature of *Guilt*, or Obligation to Puniſhment, which hereby appears naturally to reſult from the Abuſe of Liberty, either in our neglecting the poſſible and moſt conducive Means in order to our Information, antecedently to our Judgment of any Action; or elſe from a like Abuſe of Liberty conſequent to our Judgment, in approving, chuſing, or practiſing that or a different Action either raſhly or obſtinately. For as for the pure Act of Judging, ſince 'tis neceſſarily determin'd by the Object as it appears to us, 'tis clear we can't be culpable merely on that Account.

By this it likewiſe appears, that Human Liberty, in its full Latitude, is not the Attribute of any particular Act, Power or Faculty, but is the Property

of

of the Agent or Man. For though the Judgment, Approbation, Choice, and Determination to Action be exempt from the fatal Influence of any external Force or internal Defect, yet if the Agent be not capable of Not approving, Not chuſing and executing even what is really beſt, as well as of approving, chuſing and executing it, theſe mention'd Degrees of Liberty can be no ſufficient Principle of Action in our imperfect State and Circumſtances, or as we are ſubject to Laws as Trials of Obedience.

By the Conſideration of ſuch Liberty as is agreeable to ourſelves in our particular State and Capacity, we ſhall now be the better qualify'd to form ſome Conception of that which is ſuitable to the Idea of the eternal Being. In order to which, I think we may lay it down for a Principle, *That the Nature of Liberty in all capable Beings is the ſame, allowing only for ſuch accidental Diverſity as may proceed from the different States and Perfection of its Subjects.*

Now to diſcover wherein the Perfection and peculiar State of the Eternal Being may have occaſioned his Liberty to differ from that of our ſelves, and other imperfect Agents, we may here recollect what we before obſerv'd when we diſcours'd of Human Liberty, *viz.* That all Determination and Neceſſity is not inconſiſtent with Perfection, but that on the contrary, there is ever an immediate Determination both of the Agent to Good in general, and of the Judgment by the Nature and Circumſtances of the Objects when duly perceiv'd (under the Notion of Good) in particular. To which we may add, what we likewiſe hinted before, *viz.* That the more conſtant and uniform the Determination even of the conſequent Acts is to that which is really better, (proceeding from an internal Principle of Perfection, and not from any external Influence) the more

perfect is the Agent's Liberty, as may hereafter appear.

Agreeably to this, it will, 'tis conceiv'd, be manifeſt, that the Difference between the Liberty of the Eternal Being, and that of ourſelves and other imperfect Agents, muſt chiefly conſiſt in the Conſtancy and Uniformity of the Determination, not only of his Judgment, but of all his conſequent Acts, to what is really better. This is the undoubted Reſult of the Supreme Perfection of his Nature. For as where the Underſtanding is never deceiv'd by falſe Colours and Appearances, there the Judgment can't but be always right; ſo where no irregular Paſſions, nor any imaginable Impediments intervene between the Judgment, Choice, and Execution, there all the conſequent Acts can't but be perpetually agreeable to the right Judgment.

The conſtant uniform Determination of the Deity with Reference to his conſequent Action, muſt be conceiv'd to diſcover itſelf in two ſeveral Reſpects: Both in Reſpect to his *Manner of Acting*, and to certain of his *Acts*.

Firſt, It can't but diſcover itſelf in his *Manner of Acting*. For Inſtance, the very Nature of the moſt perfect of Beings can't but immutably determine him when he acts, to act wiſely and regularly. When he inclines to external Action, (*i. e.* to *Action* which has a Reference to other Beings) he can no more fail to chuſe the beſt End, and to employ the fitteſt or moſt conducive Means, than he can to underſtand them. For that there is a Fitneſs and Unfitneſs in the Natures or Circumſtances of Things and Actions, will be undeniably clear from what ſhall be obſerved hereafter.

This makes it appear how the Divine Action may, notwithſtanding the moſt perfect Liberty, proceed from a Principle as conſtant and uniform as the ſuppos'd *Stoical* Fate it ſelf. And this, by Conſe-

quence,

quence, ſhows the neceſſary Connexion of the moral Attributes of the Deity (ſuch as Juſtice, Mercy, *&c.*) with the natural ones (his Self-activity, Intelligence, Liberty, *&c.*) in the preſent State of Things. For though theſe moral Attributes denote no particular Perfections of the Divine *Nature*, but only ſuch relative Ideas of our Minds as reſult from the Conſideration of the Divine *Actions* with Reference to ourſelves and other Beings, as will be ſhewn; yet ſince the natural Perfections, which are the Principles of thoſe Divine Acts, are immutable both in themſelves and in their Manner of Acting, we may infallibly conclude, that whenever the Deity inclines to act, his Actions muſt conſtantly come under thoſe Denominations.

'Tis to be confeſs'd, that in an Agent ſubject to Laws, and in a State of Tryal, ſuch conſtant natural Determination to the beſt Method of chuſing and practiſing, would, as we hinted before, be inconſiſtent with his State and Circumſtances. For ſince ſuch a State ſuppoſes a Poſſibility of the contrary Acts, *viz.* of Obedience and Diſobedience, 'tis clear that the Liberty which agrees to it muſt, even after the Perception of the Obligation and Judgment of the Duty requir'd, ſtill include an Indetermination with Reference to the conſequent Acts. For without this, the Impoſition of Laws as Trials of Obedience, would ſeem impertinent, and Rewards and Puniſhments could have no Place; ſince 'tis manifeſt, that where-ever Rewards and Puniſhments take Place, they muſt be diſpens'd on account of ſomewhat which was originally in the Subject's Power either to do or omit.

But though ſuch an Indetermination, with Reference to Acts conſequent on the Judgment, be that which is eſſential to the Liberty of an Agent ſubject to a Trial of Obedience to the Laws of a ſuperior

Being, yet it is merely accidental to Liberty in general, and far from being in itself a Perfection.

Again, The constant uniform Determination of the Deity must be conceiv'd to discover itself not only with Respect to his Manner of Acting, but with reference to certain of his *Acts*. Thus for Instance: Since the Deity could not but be ever conscious of the Perfections of his adorable Nature (his Omnipotence, Wisdom, *&c.*) consequently, he could not but know it was fitter those Perfections should be exercis'd, than that they should eternally remain unemploy'd. Therefore, since (as was observ'd) his Choice cannot but follow his Perception of what is fitter, and his consequent Acts cannot but be ever agreeable to his Choice; it plainly follows that he could never be indetermin'd with Reference to external Action. Yet this could not hinder but that his external Action, though proceeding from such Determination, might still be in the most perfect Manner free: Inasmuch as it was no Determination from any external Force nor internal Defect, but the pure Result of his own essential Perfection, and executed when and in such Order as it pleas'd him. For that the Eternal Being might have created the World Millions of Ages sooner, (*i. e.* might have caus'd it to have been of a vastly longer Duration than it actually is) is undeniable. And that he, who was absolutely independent of the Creatures, might have observ'd a very different Order in some Respects, and yet in sufficient Consistence with his great Design, is not to be doubted; since in many Cases different Methods are equally suitable and conducive; and different Species of Creatures may be in all Respects of equal Fitness and Capacity. So that, with Reference to the Beginning, Order, and particular Acts and Objects of Creation, the Deity was (?tis humbly conceiv'd) under no original Determination; though with

with Reſpect to the *Act of Creation in general*, he appears to have been ever determin'd by his own eſſential Perfection. But of this more will be ſaid anon.

Beſides, by ſome previous Act that was compleatly free, we may conceive him ſometimes to contract a conſequent immutable Determination to ſome particular future Act. For Example, in the Caſe of an abſolute Promiſe, tho' the Engagement may be completely free, yet the Performance, with all its natural Conſequences, can't but become neceſſary to the Deity. For that ſuch Determination is very conſiſtent with the divine Liberty, is manifeſt: Since ſo perfectly wiſe a Being, who is fully acquainted with the Relations and Dependencies of Things, can't be conceiv'd to oblige himſelf to the Performance of any thing without a particular Regard to all its natural aud neceſſary Conſequences. Which makes it evident, that in ſuch a Caſe, theſe are no leſs the Effects of his Liberty, than the Engagement from whence they proceeded.

From what has been obſerv'd, we may now be aſſiſted to form ſome Idea of the Divine Perfection with Regard to *Liberty*, by concluding, *That though the moſt perfect of Beings was ever Free, or under no eternal Determination to any particular external Act, (ſince neither his own Nature, nor the Influence of any other Being appears to have occaſioned ſuch Determination;) yet his eſſential Perfection may well be ſuppos'd to have ever determin'd him to external Action in general, and that in the fitteſt and moſt ſuitable Manner: And not only ſo, but that, in the preſent Scene of Things, a previous Act, to which he was in no Reſpect oblig'd or determin'd, may be conceiv'd ſometimes to occaſion a conſequent Determination and Neceſſity with reference to other particular Acts, without Prejudice to his Liberty.*

'Tis

'Tis eaſy to remark, that this Deſcription of the divine Liberty cannot eaſily be reconcil'd with a certain current Opinion; I mean that of *particular eternal Decrees*. 'Twill therefore be neceſſary to give it a few Thoughts.

I perſuade my ſelf, 'tis a Matter of no great Difficulty to make it appear, that this Opinion has no ſolid Foundation in *Scripture*. For as to thoſe Texts which are uſually produc'd to prove the Eternity of certain particular Decrees, they'll perhaps appear to be inſufficient. Thus, the Texts which ſpeak of *Election before the Foundation of the World*, can be of little weight to ſuch who think it no neceſſary Article of Faith to believe that this inferior World was the earlieſt Work of the Eternal Omnipotent Being; and who are convinc'd that either this or any other Part of the Univerſe, might have been of a much ancienter Date than it actually is, without being Eternal. And as for that other Text which is uſually produc'd, 2 *Tim.* i. 9, where *Grace* is ſaid to have been given πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων, *ante Tempora Seculorum*, or before the Times of Ages (as *Beza* renders it.) I ſuppoſe few will doubt, but that the natural Senſe of the Phraſe is that which our *Engliſh* Tranſlation aſſigns it, *viz. before the World began*: The Times of Ages being properly no other than the Duration of this inferior World, which conſiſts of a Succeſſion of Ages and Generations. That this is the genuine Interpretation, may further appear by comparing *Rom.* xvi. 25. with *Col.* i. 26. In the former Text the Apoſtle ſpeaking of the Myſtery of the Goſpel which was then revealed, informs us that it was hid χρόνοις αἰωνίοις, *from the Times of Ages*, or *ſince the World began*, as the *Engliſh* renders it. Agreeably to which Interpretation, the ſame Apoſtle, in the latter Text, ſpeaking of the ſame reveal'd Myſtery, calls it *the Myſtery which was hid from Ages and Generations*, i. e. from the Beginning

ning of Ages and Generations; or, which is the ſame, *ſince the World began.* Which makes it moſt evident, that this Proof can import no more to the preſent Purpoſe, than the other we conſider'd above. The like may be ſaid of that Text, where Mention is made of the *Eternal Purpoſe of God*, Epheſ. iii. 11. Πρόθεσις τῶν αἰώνων, or *the Purpoſe of Ages*, as it is in the Original, which may ſignify either that it hath endured ever ſince the World began, or that it ſhall endure as long as the World continues. And when the Apoſtle ſpeaks of the *Blood* διαθήκης αἰωνίου *of the Covenant of Ages*, Heb. xiii. 20. we need not, perhaps, underſtand it in any other Senſe than the former Texts.

Nor are the Proofs of the Eternity of particular Decrees borrow'd from *Reaſon* of greater Force, tho' of greater Subtilty; which we ſhall briefly conſider.

Firſt, Some have attempted a Proof of the Eternity of particular Decrees, from the ſuppos'd Neceſſity or Eternity of certain Truths. Which reputed eternal Truths are of two Sorts. Some are ſaid to refer to the *Eſſences* of Things; others to their *Exiſtence* and *Actions*. Of the former Sort are ſuch as theſe in the Mathematicks, *A Circle hath equal Diameters*, *Two and Three are equal to Five*; and in ſhort, all Propoſitions of any Kind, whoſe Predicates are of the Eſſence of their Subjects. Of the latter Sort are all ſuch Propoſitions as relate to Things or Actions not yet in Being; ſuch as theſe, *The Sun will exiſt*, Socrates *will diſpute*. Which Propoſitions, ſince (as is uſually imagin'd) they never began to be true, ſome are apt to conclude, muſt have deriv'd an eternal Verity (or Truth) from certain particular eternal Decrees of God.

But *Firſt*, as for ſuch reputed eternal Truths as concern the *Eſſences* of created Things, 'twill perhaps appear, that theſe were no diſtinct, neceſſary

or

or eternal Truths, but only particular contingent Determinations of this one general eternal or neceſſary Truth, (in which they were but virtually included) viz. *That which is the ſame is not different*, or, *Nothing can be diverſe from itſelf*. Which general Truth is the Baſis or Foundation of all Science, and has an immediate Connection with the *Exiſtence* of the eternal or neceſſarily-exiſtent Being, without the leaſt Dependence on his *Decree*. For it never was more neceſſarily true that the Deity exiſted, than it was that he could not be diverſe from Himſelf.

To prove this, we may firſt obſerve, that the Senſe of theſe Propoſitions, *A Circle hath equal Diameters*, *Two and Three are equal to Five*, and the like, is in itſelf identical; and they can amount to no more than theſe, *A Circle is nothing elſe but a Circle*, *Two and Three are not different from Two and Three*. For ſince a *Figure with equal Diameters* ſignifies the very ſame with *a Circle*, and *Five* is nothing different from *Two and Three*, 'tis manifeſt, that in theſe and the like Propoſitions, there's no real Difference between the Extremes, and by Conſequence no proper Relation of Equality between Subject and Property, as is uſually imagin'd, but a real and proper Identity. For though theſe and the like Propoſitions add to our Knowledge by a clearer Diſcovery of the ſame Idea, and are therefore very different (with reſpect to us) from ſuch other identical Propoſitions wherein one and the ſame Idea is affirm'd of itſelf without Diſtinction of Words, yet (in themſelves conſider'd) they are equally identical: Since the Idea ſignify'd by the Predicate is the ſame which is ſignify'd by the Subject; only with this Difference, that the Predicate expreſſes it more clearly, or with ſome Modification which was not particularly expreſs'd by the Subject.

So

So that this Argument amounts at laſt to no more than this, *viz.* That becauſe in the general it appears that every Being which at any Time exiſts, has of Neceſſity a peculiar Nature, or is neceſſarily the ſame with it ſelf, and diſtinct from all others, therefore it was eternally and particularly decreed it ſhould be ſo.

But, I take it, 'tis a ridiculous Thing to imagine a particular eternal Decree was requiſite, in order to beſtow a neceſſary or eternal Truth on theſe important Propoſitions, *A Circle is a Circle, and not a Triangle, Two and Three are Five, and not an Hundred*, and the like. For whatever Neceſſity belongs to theſe Truths, is plainly no other than what is included in that eternal univerſal Truth we mention'd before: Which Truth (as we obſerv'd) was not deriv'd from any Divine Decree, but had a neceſſary immediate Connection with the Divine Exiſtence and Nature itſelf. And as for the particular Determinations or Applications of that eternal univerſal Truth by the divine Decrees and productive Power either to the Eſſence or to the Exiſtence of thoſe or any other created Subjects; they were not neceſſary, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, but merely contingent. For as nothing neceſſarily exiſted unproduc'd but the divine Nature, whoſe Non-exiſtence was a Contradiction in it ſelf; ſo Nothing can with Reaſon be affirmed to have been neceſſarily decreed and produc'd, but ſuch Beings whoſe Non-production was a Contradiction to the *Divine Nature*. But what particular Being or Sort of Beings dare we affirm to be of ſuch a Nature, as that it was a Contradiction to the divine Nature not to have decreed and produc'd it, or (which is the ſame) that the Deity could not have been Himſelf, had he not created it? 'Tis freely confeſs'd, that all the Creatures of God are in themſelves good. But we know there are Degrees of Perfection among 'em; and none

none can ſay that any exiſts with all the Perfection that Omnipotence could beſtow; or, by Conſequence, that any (much leſs every) Creature was the beſt or moſt perfect the Deity could produce. Which Reflexion yields us a ſenſible Demonſtration of the divine Indetermination to particular Acts. For had the Deity been under a natural Determination to the decreeing and producing of every Creature particularly conſider'd, it muſt have been under the Notion of the Beſt or moſt Perfect. But then there could have been ſeen no Creature inferior in Perfection to another, and an univerſal Equality muſt have appeared throughout the Frame of Nature.

And then, as for ſuch Propoſitions as relate to the Exiſtence and Actions of Things not yet in Being, ſuch as, *The Sun will exiſt*, Socrates *will diſpute*, and the like; they can't, *in an abſolute Senſe*, be affirm'd to have been neceſſarily or eternally true, without begging the Queſtion in Debate, or ſuppoſing thoſe very eternal Decrees they were deſign'd to prove. For if there were no ſuch particular eternal Decrees, 'tis certain theſe Propoſitions muſt, in an abſolute Senſe, have been eternally or neceſſarily falſe; in as much as the Exiſtence and Actions of particular Creatures, if not eternally decreed, muſt of themſelves have been no other than pure Contingencies. But the Truth of every affirmative Propoſition conſiſts in the Conformity of the Predicate or Property with the Nature of the Subject or Thing of which it is affirm'd: Which Conformity could not be, if Neceſſity was abſolutely affirm'd of a Thing or Action in itſelf contingent or indetermin'd.

There is then Nothing in the Nature of this latter Sort of Propoſitions, which can oblige us to aſſert they were eternally or neceſſarily true in an *abſolute Senſe*, or to allow that there was (as ſome imagin) an abſolute eternal Certainty of all Events. But if they

they were true only in a *Conditional Senſe*, 'tis manifeſt they were no otherwiſe true, than as the like Propoſitions concerning any particular poſſible Subject may be affirm'd to have been ſo, though it ſhould never exiſt. For Example, this Propoſition, *A Centaur ſhall exiſt, if it pleaſe the Deity ſo to decree*, was always as true as theſe, *The Sun will exiſt*, or Socrates *will diſpute, if God ſo pleaſes*. And it is equally clear, that this conditional Truth proves no particular eternal Decrees, though it proves an eternal free Agent, who always poſſeſs'd a ſovereign Power of decreeing, creating, and influencing particular Natures if and as he pleaſed.

Upon the whole 'tis eaſy to conclude, that the *eternal ideal World*, in which ſome *Platonick* Gentlemen have lately imagin'd themſelves to have made ſuch mighty Diſcoveries, and which is chiefly ſupported by *Eternal Eſſences* and *Futurities*, is in a more proper Senſe than can be ſaid of the *Earth*, *founded upon Nothing*.

Another Argument in Favour of particular eternal Decrees, is borrowed from the Opinion of a *particular eternal Foreknowledge*. This, it ſeems, was the Method of the *Platoniſts*, who appear to have been the firſt Introducers of that Doctrine. For they imagining it to have been eſſential to the Perfection of the Deity, eternally and particularly to foreknow all other Beings and all Events depending on their Exiſtence, were probably thence diſpoſed to receive the Opinion of particular eternal Decrees as the only ſufficient Hypotheſis to account for ſuch Foreknowledge.

In Reply to this Argument, we ſhall here only propoſe it to be conſider'd, whether it be not more agreeable to the Independence and Liberty of the eternal Being, to ſuppoſe his own moſt perfect Nature to have been the only neceſſary particular Object of his Knowledge; or whether the Suppoſition of

of the eternal or abſolutely neceſſary Decrees and Foreknowledge of particular Creatures and all their Actions, can be maintain'd, without aſſerting not only all the particular Creatures, but all their Actions, to be in their own Natures ſuch as the Deity could not have omitted to decree and foreknow, without Prejudice to his Perfection and Happineſs.

There is yet another Proof of eternal Decrees attempted from the Opinion of an *Inſtantaneous Eternity*, and the *Abſolute Immutability* of the divine Action founded thereon. But the Abſurdity of this pretended Proof is generally confeſs'd, and will be diſplay'd in the *Chap.* of *Eternity*, *Book* II.

We have the longer inſiſted on this Opinion of *Particular Eternal Decrees*, becauſe of the impure Conſequences with which it appears to have defiled the Innocence of the Chriſtian Religion; which Conſequences, as they depend on it, muſt neceſſarily fall with it. For if there were no eternal particular Decrees of every Creature and Event, then as the abſolute Predeſtination or Predetermination of all Perſons and Events from Eternity, muſt be rejected (and no ſufficient Reaſon will appear for aſſerting ſuch Predeſtination of a later Date) ſo that particular immediate determining Concurſe of God to the worſt of Actions, for rendring thoſe Decrees effectual, will appear to be an unneceſſary Doctrine; and thereby both the Juſtice of God, and the Liberty and Accountableneſs of Creatures will obtain a ſufficient Vindication. Without ſuch a Vindication, what-ever Arguments we may employ to convince Men of Atheiſtick Principles, that it is a Thing very deſirable there ſhould be a God, will, I doubt, be of very little Effect. For certainly, it is not the Idea of a moſt intelligent and wiſe Being, freely determining himſelf to Acts of Goodneſs and Juſtice, which frights ſuch Perſons; but much rather that of ſuch a Being as theſe Opinions repreſent

ſent the Deity to be: Opinions far leſs pious than the Opinion of the *Stoicks*, as obliging their Aſſertors (at leaſt indirectly and by Conſequence) to make the Beſt of Beings the Author of the worſt Actions and Events; which to avoid, thoſe Pagans rather choſe to lay the Blame, in ſome Degree at leaſt, on I know not what independent uncontroulable Deſtiny.

CHAP. VIII.

OUR Secondary Notions of the Perfection of GOD, conſider'd with Reference to Himſelf, we have obſerv'd to be,

I. *Spirituality.* Men have generally agreed to expreſs their Idea of the Beſt and Nobleſt of Beings by the Word *Spirit*: A Metaphor taken from the *Air* or *Wind*, than which, by Reaſon of its Tenuity, perpetual Agitation, and wide Expanſion, Nothing ſeem'd more proper to repreſent that inviſible Nature which pervades, actuates, and comprehends all Things. Which inviſible Nature, though to Nothing ſo fitly reſembled as to the Air (which of all the Portions of Matter is the leaſt perceiv'd by our Senſes) yet has been uſually conceiv'd as diſtinct from the moſt refined Matter, and as including the three Properties already demonſtrated, of which Matter was generally ſuppoſed to be deſtitute;

1. *Self-Activity.* Thus *Thales*, *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, and others, according to the Philoſophy of the Eaſtern Nations, aſſerted Two Principles, the one Active and Spiritual, the other Paſſive and Material.

2. *Intelligence.* Says *Poſidonius* in *Stob.* ὁ Θεὸς ἐστι Πνεῦμα νοερὸν, *God is an Intelligent Spirit.* To ſignify this, they were wont to give him the Titles of Νοῦς and Δαίμων, both which import *Conſciouſneſs* and *Perception.*

3. *Liberty.* Some of the Philoſophers, I confeſs, ſuppos'd the Deity to be ſubject to the Influence of Fate. But the Ἴλυς of *Orpheus*, the Ὕδωρ of *Thales*, the Γλὴ of *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, nd the Ἄπειρον of *Anaxagoras*, (by which Terms they uſually ſignify'd the material Principle of the Univerſe) are always deſcrib'd as void of Liberty or ſelf-determining Power, which theſe Philoſophers ſuppos'd to be only in the Νοῦς, or *Mind*, who both impreſs'd and regulated their Motions.

II. Another ſecondary Notion of the Perfection of God, conſider'd with Reference to Himſelf, is *Conſtancy* or *Immutability:* Which we conceive is to be affirm'd both of his *Nature* and *Action.*

1. Of his *Nature.* The Spring of Inconſtancy or Mutability, in this Reſpect, muſt be either ſome neceſſary internal Principle of Corruption, or his own Will, or elſe ſome external Cauſe. But the firſt of theſe is abſolutely inconſiſtent with his perfect vital Selfactivity, the ſecond with his perfect Intelligence, and the third with the Perfection of his Liberty.

2. Of his *Actions.* In treating of the Divine Actions, we may, it is conceiv'd, lay it down as an infallible Principle, *That we can be no farther oblig'd to aſſert their Immutability, than as it appears to have a neceſſary Connection with the Immutability of the Divine Nature.*

The Divine Actions may be conſider'd, either as eſſential, or as uneſſential. The former, becauſe they flow immediately from the Divine Nature, can't but be immutable in the ſame Senſe as the Nature itſelf. The latter, (which 'tis humbly conceiv'd, had no neceſſary Connection with the Divine Nature) are of two Sorts, *viz.* either his particular Decrees, or their Executions. By his Immutability or Conſtancy with Reference to both theſe, 'tis conceiv'd we are to underſtand in the general, his un-

unvariably decreeing Ends ſuitable to his Nature, and his ſteddy Purſuit and infallible Attainment of thoſe Ends: Both which evidently imply Perfection, and reſult from the abſolute Invariableneſs or Immutability of his Nature. But as for his particular Acts, and his Knowledge conſequent thereupon, the Immutability of his Nature infers no ſuch Invariableneſs with Regard to them, but rather the quite contrary; for as much as their Variety muſt be conceiv'd immediately to proceed from the various Exerciſe of his Liberty; which (in all indifferent Caſes) is the Reſult of the immutable Perfection of his Nature.

And as for the Actions of other Beings, and all Events depending on their Exiſtence; they are alike incapable of cauſing any Change in the Divine Knowledge inconſiſtent with the Perfection and Immutability of the Divine Nature. On the contrary, 'tis manifeſtly a Point of Perfection to know Things as they really are; which yet can't be without ſome Variation in the Manner of Knowledge anſwerable to the Variation in the State of its Objects.

III. Another ſecondary Notion of the Divine Perfection, conſider'd with Reference to the Deity Himſelf, is *Happineſs*. This Idea is the neceſſary Reſult of all our other Conceptions of the eternal and moſt perfect Being abſolutely conſider'd. For a Being which eſſentially and independently poſſeſſes a perfect Selfactivity, Intelligence, and Liberty, (to which three Ideas, all our Conceptions of the Divine Internal Attributes appear to be reducible) join'd with a juſt Reflection upon, and Valuation of 'em, can't but be completely happy.

All real Happineſs ariſes from a certain Complacence in the Poſſeſſion, Hope, or Expectation of ſome Good: Which Complacence is ever proportionate either to the intrinſick Worth, or, at leaſt,

to the Eſtimation of that Good in the Mind of its Subject. From which, 'tis evident, that That only can be a compleatly happy Being, which both poſſeſſes a perfect and permanent Good, and whoſe Opinion of it is ever agreeable to its real Worth.

As it hence appears that the Eternal Being can't but be a perfectly happy Being; ſo it is no leſs clear, that Himſelf is the only Reaſon of his Complacence and Happineſs; for as much as his own Nature alone comprehends whatever is good and valuable. For ſince (as will be ſhewn hereafter) whatever elſe exiſts, could have no other real Worth but what it deriv'd from the eternal and moſt perfect Being; 'tis manifeſt that what-ever Good is found in any other Nature, can no otherwiſe pleaſe him than as a Communication from Himſelf: Which Pleaſure can no more increaſe his eſſential Happineſs, than the Reflection of a Ray can add to the Luſtre of the Sun.

The *Epicureans* were ſo far from imagining their Deities could receive any Acceſſion to their Happineſs by concerning themſelves with Beings of an inferior Rank, that they thought it too mean an Employment, and a Fatigue inconſiſtent with that Repoſe or Tranquillity, which they conceiv'd to be the chief Ingredient of Happineſs. Therefore, in pure Civility, they baniſh'd 'em out of the World, pretending it yielded no Place worthy of their Reſidence, and ſeated them in certain ultramundane Spaces, there to live in uninterrupted Pleaſure, and neither to trouble themſelves nor others, by a too officious intermedling with human Affairs. Their Seats the Poet thus deſcribes.

Quas neque concutiunt Venti, neque Nubila Nimbis
Aſpergunt, neque Nix acri concreta Pruinâ
Cana cadens violat, ſemperque innubilus Æther
Integit, et largè diffuſo Lumine ridet.

— And

— — — And happy Seats,
Which Storm or violent Tempeſt never beats,
Nor Snow invades, but with the pureſt Air,
And gaudy Light diffus'd, look gay and fair.
CREECH.

Thus thoſe Philoſophers were us'd to conceive of their fictitious Deities; if at leaſt it be not a Diſparagement to that Honourable Character to call ſuch Men *Philoſophers*, who, though we ſhould in Charity ſuppoſe them to have believ'd ſuch Divine Beings, yet, like the Vulgar, fram'd them after their own Model. For though it muſt be own'd, that they have rightly placed Happineſs in the *Tranquillity of the Mind*, yet in this they were deceiv'd, when they ſuppos'd that ſuch Tranquillity was abſolutely inconſiſtent with Action in ſuch a Being as the Deity. How mean and unphiloſophical was it to imagine the moſt perfect Power ſhould be ſubject to Fatigue, or that the moſt perfect Underſtanding ſhould be perplex'd and diſcompos'd by too much Application and Solicitude! This was, in Effect, to mingle the two Extremes, and to level the nobleſt with the baſeſt of Beings: Thoſe Natures being ever the leaſt perfect which are the leaſt capable of and propenſe to Action.

From all this the general Concluſion is, that as nothing in any of the inferior Beings is capable of making any Addition to the Happineſs of the Deity (which can reſult only from the Conſciouſneſs of his own eſſential Perfections;) ſo his creating ſuch Beings, and caring for them when created, could be no Diminution of it.

CHAP. IX.

WE now proceed to conſider our Ideas of the Divine Perfection or Sufficiency with Reference to other Beings as *merely poſſible*.

I. One of theſe we obſerv'd to be *Omnipotence*, or Perfect Effective Power. By this, 'tis conceiv'd, no more can be meant, than *an Ability to do or produce whatever is conſiſtent in itſelf, and agreeable to the Divine Nature*. For to extend it farther, would be in Effect to aſcribe to the Deity a Power of cauſing a Thing both to be and not to be at once and in the ſame Senſe (for all Contradictions are reducible to That) or, which is all one, a Power of producing a *ſubſtantial Nothing*.

The proper Action of perfect effective Power, will appear to have a twofold Notion, *viz.* either of *Creation* or of *Suſtentation*.

By *Creation*, is here meant the Production of a Thing that before was not. By *Suſtentation*, we underſtand the preſerving or continuing a Thing in its Exiſtence or Being.

In order to prove that the true Idea of the Divine Sufficiency includes what we call *Creative Power*, we need not here demonſtrate that there has actually been a Creation. 'Twill be enough for our preſent Purpoſe, to prove Creation a Poſſibility. For if this can be ſet in a clear Light, 'twill evidently appear, that creative Power can't but belong to the eternal and moſt perfect Being.

Neither is it neceſſary, in order to a Proof of the Poſſibility of a Creation, to undertake to explain the Manner of it, or to reduce its Idea to a Level with our Underſtandings. 'Twill be ſufficient to reſcue it from the Charge of Contradiction and Abſurdity. For I take it, 'tis univerſally agreed, that per-

perfect Power may extend to any thing on this Side a Contradiction.

Though we want not Variety of Proofs of the Formation of the World (ſuch as are derived from the Nature of Succeſſion, the late Invention of Arts univerſally uſeful, the gradual Increaſe of Mankind, and other Animals, *&c.*) the Evidence of which was ſufficient to oblige ſuch Philoſophers as preceded *Ariſtotle*, almoſt univerſally to attribute the preſent Frame of Things either to the Agency of a powerful and moſt intelligent Being, or elſe to a caſual Hit or lucky Combination of the Parts of Matter; yet it ſeems to have been their Opinion, that the *Matter* of which it was form'd was eternal and independent. This their Perſwaſion appears to have been grounded on the Obſervation of the preſent Courſe of Nature and Art; according to which, whatever is produc'd is made out of pre-exiſtent Materials. From hence it was that they concluded it abſurd to imagin any thing ſhould (as they wrongly expreſs'd it) either ſpring out of Nothing, or be reduc'd to Nothing.

But 'tis worth obſerving, that many of the Philoſophers, who could not, in the Cauſe of a Deity, raiſe their Speculations above the vulgar Level, were, when they came to reaſon on the contrary Hypotheſis, extravagant and fantaſtick enough. Thoſe very Gentlemen who were ſo careful to avoid an Abſurdity (as they would fain have had it accounted) on the Side of Religion, were not ſo ſcrupulous in the Defence of Atheiſm. For rather than ſuppoſe this noble Frame of the World to have been the Creature of a perfectly powerful and intelligent Cauſe, they choſe to father it on Chance, and to turn the moſt ſerious Affair into a Game at Hazard. Rather than own their Relation to the greateſt and beſt of Beings, they choſe to level themſelves with the Brutes, to imagine that, like Inſects, they were

originally begotten by the Sun's Heat, and ſprung from Pimples and Tumours of the Earth. They could eaſily derive Liberty from Neceſſity, Beauty from Deformity, Harmony from Diſcord, by a mere Chance, or, which is all one, without any determining Cauſe at all. But to create the minuteſt Thing in Nature, muſt, in their Opinion, paſs for abſolutely impoſſible. And why? But becauſe they had never ſeen an Inſtance of that Kind. They could ſometimes indeed believe as ſtrongly as other People; but here they deſired to be excuſed, and could not think themſelves oblig'd to believe a Creation, becauſe they were not admitted to be Witneſſes of the Work! They never had ſeen the Birth of the leaſt Duſt or Atom, how then could they imagine a *Generation* of the Univerſe *! They could never obſerve an Artificer to make any Piece of Workmanſhip without his *Materials*, without his *Inſtruments*; how then could they conceive the vaſt Body of the Sun, the innumerable Stars, the maſſy Rocks and Mountains, to have been the Effects of Art!

This Method of Reaſoning is very like the Arguings of a Man bred in the dark, diſputing againſt the Poſſibility of Sight. Should ſuch a Perſon be told that there's a Place in the World, where, if he came, he ſhould need only to open his Eyes, and be immediately and diſtinctly ſenſible of an almoſt infinite Variety of Objects, each vaſtly bigger than himſelf, and many of 'em at very remote Diſtances; would not ſuch a Story as this appear to him as incredible, as that of a Creation from Nothing? Might he not, with equal Reaſon, argue againſt the Poſſibility of ſuch a Relation, from the very Principles thoſe Philoſophers made uſe of againſt ſuch a Creation? As yet, might he ſay, I have been ſenſible of but very few Objects at once, and thoſe ſuch

* *Ocellus* and others contend, that there's no Production but by Generation.

as I am aſſur'd could not exceed the Dimenſions of my own Body, and whoſe Diſtance was, for the moſt Part, no greater than the Length of my Arm or Staff. And as for ſuch others as I have perceiv'd at a remoter Diſtance, they have been either ſingle, or if more, extremely confus'd and indiſtinct. What Magick muſt there be in my Eyes, that ſo little Members ſhould be capable of conveying the diſtinct Reſemblances of ſo great Variety of bulky Objects at once? If it be reply'd, That the Eyes don't perform this alone, but with the Help of a certain Inſtrument call'd *Light*; yet what Idea could ſuch a Perſon have of Light different from that of his Staff? And what Inducement could ſuch an Idea be to him to allow that to be poſſible, which by Arguments deriv'd from his own Experience, he had before rejected as abſurd and incredible?

But though ſuch a Perſon, if he (with thoſe Philoſophers) reſolve to admit nothing for Truth or Poſſibility, but what is agreeable to his own Experience of Things, and upon a Level with the preſent Ideas of his own Mind, muſt remain under a Neceſſity of disbelieving all the Reports he hears of Sight and Colours, and rejecting them as Impoſtures, yet we, who have had the Uſe of our Eyes, ſhall never, I ſuppoſe, be perſuaded, to come into his Opinion.

This ought to convince us, that there may be Poſſibilities in the Nature of Things, of which we are as incapable of forming Ideas, as ſuch a Perſon would be of forming the Idea of Sight. And why may not Creation be ſuch a Poſſibility? Why may not He produce from Nothing, whoſe Eſſence and Action depend on Nothing? If we find ourſelves incapable of conceiving how a Thing which was not ſhould begin to be, are we not alike incapable of comprehending how any thing ſhould exiſt without Beginning?

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We need only take a View of ourſelves, to find Inſtances of ſuch Powers and Manners of Acting as are inconceivable to us. It can't be deny'd that we perceive, we conſider and reflect, we confute and demonſtrate; yet we may perhaps as well conceive the Creation of the Univerſe, as the Production of a ſingle Thought by the Mind. Our Feet practiſe all the Steps of a Dance, our Fingers readily perform their Parts at a Muſical Concert; and yet I doubt, we are no better acquainted with the Power which impreſſes and governs their Motions, than with that which regulates the Courſes of the Stars. But if we ſo little underſtand ſuch Powers and Actions of our own as do not come within the immediate Notice of our external Senſes, ought we to think it ſtrange that we can't comprehend the Action of a Being ſo much ſuperior to ourſelves, and whoſe Nature ſo vaſtly tranſcends the Capacity of our weak and imperfect Minds?

We can't comprehend by what Sort of Power God moves Matter; and need we admire we can form no Idea of the Power by which he created it? Our Imaginations have no other Materials to work on, in forming an Idea of the original Power, but ſuch as they derive from the Objects we daily converſe with. But may not a Perſon who has an Icteriſm in his Eyes, with as much Reaſon contend, there's no other Colour but yellow, as we, who are ſo little acquainted with the World, that there's no nobler Manner of Acting, than ſuch as our narrow Experience informs us of?

But ſome will perhaps object, that a Production from Nothing is not only inconceivable to us in our preſent Circumſtances, but contradictory, or abſolutely inconceivable.

Before we reply 'twill be fit to premiſe, that it is a very wrong Notion of Creation, to imagine it to be the Production of a Thing from Nothing, as from

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a *material Cauſe or Subject*. Our Definition of it is no other than *the Production of a Thing which was not before*.

This being conſider'd, I would ask the Objectors, wherein the Nature of a Contradiction conſiſts? Is it not in at once affirming and denying ſomewhat of the ſame Subject in the ſame Manner? But what is there like this in the Suppoſition of ſuch a Creation? I confeſs, if any Man could be found ſo abſolutely ſtupid and void of Underſtanding, as to affirm that the Deity, in creating the World, had either produc'd it out of Nothing as out of a pre-exiſtent Subject, or had caus'd it both to Be and not to Be, to be Something and Nothing at the ſame Time, ſuch a Notion of it might have ſome Right to the Character of a Contradiction. But ſince by Creation no more can be meant than the cauſing to be what was not *before*, this is evidently no more a Contradiction, than what we perceive to be done every Day; I mean the Production of new Motions by the Mind. Which is likewiſe a Sort of Production from Nothing. *

But if the *Notion* of ſuch Creation be no Contradiction, then the *Act* of Creation, how inconceivable ſoever the Manner of it may be to us, can't but be a Poſſibility, or it muſt neceſſarily come within the Compaſs of that Power which we have already prov'd to be perfect. For 'tis impoſſible a Power ſhould be perfect, if there be any thing not implying a Contradiction, which it can't do.

The other Notion of the proper Action of ſuch effective Power as is included in the Perfection or Sufficiency of the Eternal Being conſider'd with Reference to other Beings as poſſible, is that of *Suſtentation*, by which is meant the *continuing a Thing in its Exiſtence*. I take it to be undeniable, that the

* See more in *Free Thoughts concerning Souls*, p. 134.

mere

mere cauſing a Thing to Be, can't infer a Neceſſity of its Continuance in Being. If the Creation of any thing ſhould import a Neceſſity of its future Continuance, that Neceſſity muſt either proceed from the Nature of the Creature, or elſe it muſt flow from either the Nature or the Decree of the Creator. Not from the Nature of the Creature. For then 'twould be impoſſible even to that Power to annihilate it which at firſt produc'd it. Nor from the Nature of the Creator. For no eſſential Perfection of the eternal omnipotent Being can be imagin'd to infer the Neceſſity of a Creature's Continuance to Eternity, but what muſt be conceiv'd to have equally infer'd a Neceſſity of its Production from Eternity. Nor, *laſtly*, can it proceed merely from the Decree of the Creator. For the Decrees even of the Supreme Being can have no Effect unleſs put in Execution. But they can't be put in Execution without Power. And if not without Power, then the Exerciſe of that Power can be no leſs than what is meant by the Act of Suſtentation.

From the Nature of Suſtentation, 'tis eaſy to collect what muſt be the true Notion of *Annihilation*. For if a Creature can't be conceiv'd to have any natural Aptitude to continue rather than to ceaſe to be, but muſt be ſuppos'd to ſubſiſt entirely by a Dependence on the Power which originally produc'd it; then there can be no Neceſſity to imagine any poſitive Influx of Power to deſtroy it. 'Tis ſufficient to ſuppoſe a Suſpenſion of that Influence on which it depended.

The Acts of Creation and Suſtentation we term'd *the proper Acts of Omnipotence*. For the Power which is capable of theſe, can't but be equally capable of all others on this Side a Contradiction: There being no imaginable Degrees of Power between the producing or continuing a Subſtance which was not, and

and the cauſing a Thing both to Be and not to Be at once.

II. The next Conception of Sufficiency with Reference to *poſſible* Effects, is that of *Wiſdom*; whereby is (here) meant *a perfect Ability to diſpoſe and regulate in order to the moſt effectual Attainment of the beſt Ends.* In this Idea is not only included ſimple Intelligence, but whatever other Ideas have a Relation to it; ſuch as Imagination, Memory, and Judgment. All which are hereby aſſerted to belong to the Deity; but in a Manner agreeable to his Perfection.

A Being capable of producing no other than a *Chaos*, or diſorderly Heap of Rubbiſh, without the Power of contriving or diſpoſiog it ſo as might be conducive to ſome valuable End, could have no juſt Claim to the Character of a ſufficient Creator. Effective Power, ſingly conſider'd, can ſupply only the groſs Materials, and impreſs a rude unbiaſs'd Motion. Therefore to conceive a Creator without Contrivance and Deſign, is to ſink his Character below that of an ordinary Artificer. Such a Being could be no Way ſuperior to one of *Epicurus*'s inſignificant Deities, and might e'en as well ſit an idle Spectator of the Dancing Atoms, as be any farther concern'd in the Work.

Nor could Omnipotence, join'd with Contrivance and Deſign, be enough to furniſh the Notion of a perfect Creator, without the Suppoſition of a Superintending and Regulating Power: Which therefore makes the other Part of our Notion of Wiſdom. Without ſuch a Power, the Creator's Deſigns would be ſubject to the Hazard of a Defeat, and his Creatures might entirely fail of reaching their reſpective Ends; which would be no Way reconcileable to the Idea of Sufficiency or Perfection.

But the Divine Wiſdom is not only deducible from the general Idea of Perfection or Sufficiency, but

but may be demonſtrated from the particular Perfections already diſcover'd. For ſince the Deity was ever a perfectly ſelf-conſcious, free, and omnipotent Being (as was prov'd) he could not but ever fully comprehend not only his own particular Nature and Action, but in the general, the Nature and Action of whatever was producible. By Conſequence, he could not but know whatever might at any time become either fit or unfit, agreeable or diſagreeable, either to his own, or any other Nature or Action; and ſo could not but poſſeſs a perfect Ability both to judge of and to propoſe the beſt End, and to chuſe and employ the moſt conducive Means upon all Occaſions: Which is the complete Notion of Wiſdom.

III. Another undoubted Perfection of the eternal Being with Reſpect to other Beings conſider'd as *poſſible*, is that of *Omniſcience*. The Demonſtration of this has been already produc'd in the Proof we juſt now gave of the Divine Wiſdom. For the Ideas of Wiſdom and Knowledge, as eſſential to the Deity, have a near Affinity to each other: Wiſdom being no other than his Knowledge conſider'd with Reference to Practice. Therefore that which ſhall here be added concerning the Attribute of Omniſcience, will refer only to the Notion, which it's humbly conceiv'd, we ought to form of it as natural to the Deity.

The general Perfection or Sufficiency of the Divine Nature has taught us, that Omniſcience, as well as all its other particular Perfections, ought to be conſider'd as natural or eſſential to it. But the ſame Sufficiency may inſtruct us not to conceive any eſſential Perfection of the Deity with a proper Dependence on other Beings. For that Being can't be ſelf-ſufficient, whoſe Eſſence is properly dependent on another.

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It ſeems then to have been ſo far from an Imperfection in the eternal Being to have been Himſelf the only particular determinate Object of his eſſential Perception or Knowledge, that the contrary Suppoſition would debaſe his Idea, and prove injurious to his Perfection. The Evidence of this may be ſeen even in our ſelves. If we find our ſelves improv'd or advantag'd by our Acquaintance with other Beings, this yields an infallible Proof of our natural Poverty and Inſufficiency. 'Tis the Dependence and Imperfection of our Natures which gives us an Inclination to ſeek our Happineſs beyond our ſelves: Whereas to the moſt perfect of Beings, the Conſciouſneſs of his own eſſential Properties could not but be an eternal Spring of Complacence and Satisfaction. To think otherwiſe, would be, in effect, to ſuppoſe the Fountain to be fed by its own Streams, or the Sun to be enlightened by its own Rays.

Theſe Reflexions ſeem to make it evident, that whoever will form a ſuitable Idea of the eſſential Omniſcience of the moſt perfect of Beings, ought to conſider it without Regard to any particular future Objects. For though ſuch a Being as was naturally and perfectly conſcious of his own eſſential Activity (the immediate Source of all other Beings) could not but ever have a moſt perfect Knowledge of the utmoſt Extent of Poſſibility, yet this might very well be without any neceſſary Determination to particular Effects. The Knowledge of God, being perfect, was without Diſpute eſſentially or neceſſarily extended to every Poſſibility. But the Election or Choice of this or that Poſſibility in order to its future Exiſtence, was, it is conceiv'd, entirely the Reſult of his Liberty and Sovereign Pleaſure. For though the Supreme Perfection of his Nature could not but incline him to external Action in the general, (as to what was more fit than a State of

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Inactivity) yet that Perfection can't, it's conceiv'd, have neceſſarily determin'd him to any external Act in particular, foraſmuch as no particular Act or Object can be ſaid to have been abſolutely beſt or fitteſt. But if ſuch neceſſary Determination could not proceed from his eſſential Perfection, it follows that it could have proceeded from no other Original but Imperfection and Dependence; which the Nature of the Eternal Being, we are aſſur'd, could never admit.

And though the particular Decrees of God, and the Exiſtence and Actions of the Creatures conſequent thereupon, may be conceiv'd to infer a new Modification of the Divine Knowledge, yet this can import no Dependence; for as much as it proceeded not originally from the Natures or Exiſtence of the Creatures, but purely from the Liberty and Omnipotence of the great Creator Himſelf.

Much leſs could that Knowledge which the Deity ever had of the future Exiſtence of Creatures in general, infer any Dependence on the Creatures; ſince it muſt likewiſe be conceiv'd as entirely proceeding from his eſſential Perfection, without the leaſt Regard to, much leſs Dependence on, any particular determinate Objects. For notwithſtanding ſuch Foreknowledge, any particular Being might either have exiſted or not exiſted, according to his Sovereign Pleaſure.

CHAP. X.

WE come now to ſuch Ideas of the Divine Perfection as we derive from the Conſideration of other Beings as *actually exiſtent*. Which Ideas denote no particular Perfections of the Divine Nature, but only thoſe of its Actions.

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I. The firſt of theſe we obſerv'd to be *Goodneſs* or Benevolence. Which, together with *Government* and *Providence*, yields us a more ſenſible Proof of the Truth of all our former Ideas of God.

The Word *Goodneſs* may be taken either in a *Metaphyſical* Senſe, *viz.* as denoting the ſame with the general Perfection of the Divine Nature, or elſe in a *Moral* Senſe, ſo as to ſignify a Notion of our Minds derived from the Conſideration of the Exerciſe of certain particular Perfections of that adorable Nature with Reference to other Beings. And 'tis in this latter Senſe we take it here.

By *Goodneſs* in this Senſe, we here underſtand *the free Determination and Exerciſe of the Divine Wiſdom and Power in creating and ſuſtaining or preſerving the World for the wiſeſt and beſt of Ends.*

That Creation and Suſtentation, conſider'd *with Reference to the Deity*, are reputed Acts of *Goodneſs*, proceeds from hence, that they are conceiv'd to have deriv'd from the Perfection of the Divine Nature, without any Conſtraint, or the leaſt Determination from any Thing External.

Had the Deity created and ſuſtained the World by an *external Neceſſity*, ſuch as the *Stoicks* imagin'd, it muſt be confeſs'd he would have been as far from meriting the Denomination of Good or Benevolent, as any Inſtrument in the Hand of an Architect.

But if we only ſuppoſe the Reaſons for creating and ſtill preſerving a World were ever ſuch and ſo clearly perceiv'd by the divine Intellect, that the Deity was never indetermin'd in that Reſpect, nor could have omitted it in Conſiſtenee with the *internal Perfections* of his own Nature; the Caſe muſt be allow'd to be very different. By this Suppoſition both the Liberty and Goodneſs of the great Creator are ſufficiently ſecur'd; as we obſerv'd when we treated of Liberty.

Now that all the Acts of the Deity muſt needs come under the Notion of *Goodneſs*, may be firmly demonſtrated from our general Idea of his Perfection. For being compleatly ſufficient and independently happy, he could have no poſſible Temptation to Evil : Since that could only proceed either from natural Imperfection, or from Depravation ; from both which the ſelf-ſufficient Being was eternally remov'd. To imagine that the great Creator could act either for no End at all, or for a chief End that was either Evil, or leſs Good, or Indifferent, would be to ſuppoſe that the moſt perfect Wiſdom could act Imperfectly, *i. e.* Unwiſely, without the leaſt imaginable Byaſs or Temptation.

By what has been obſerved, it appears, by the Way, that *Goodneſs*, as it agrees to the Idea of God, can properly be no other than the free or unconſtrained Determination and Exerciſe of his Wiſdom and Power, as regulated by that original Fitneſs which is in the Nature or Circumſtances of Things and Actions. For that there is an original Fitneſs and Unfitneſs in the Ideas and Relations of ſome Things and Actions, muſt be confeſs'd ; unleſs we will ſay, that it was as fit for the Deity either to have created no Inhabitants of this noble Structure of the World, or elſe Inhabitants neither capable of reliſhing the Pleaſure which its Furniture could afford, nor of thanking and praiſing him for it, as to have created ſuch a Being as Man, a Being equally capable of both.

To demonſtrate that the Deity has indeed acted according to the moſt perfect Notion of Goodneſs, it remains that we directly prove there has actually been a Creation, which we before prov'd to be poſſible ; or that this vaſt, orderly, and moſt beautiful Scene of Things was the Work of that all-wiſe, free, and omnipotent Being, who, though indigent

gent of no other Being, has given Exiſtence and a Poſſibility of Happineſs to Beings innumerable.

Now this is a neceſſary Inference from our Obſervation of the World, compar'd with the rational Principles eſtabliſh'd in the Beginning of this Enquiry. For if we take a conſiderate View of Things, we ſhall eaſily perceive, that in all that beautiful and ſurprizing Variety of Beings with which we are acquainted, there's none can lay a juſt Claim to ſo high a Privilege as that of an abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence. The far greater Part are evidently void of *Life*, *Underſtanding*, *Liberty*, and ſuch other Perfections as we have found ourſelves obliged to aſcribe to a Being that thus neceſſarily exiſts. And as for ourſelves, and ſuch others as have ſome faint Reſemblances of thoſe Perfections, our Mutability and abſolute Incapacity of ſecuring to ourſelves the Poſſeſſion of them, are infallible Proofs that we can claim no Right to 'em through an abſolute Neceſſity. But if not through an abſolute Neceſſity, then it can be only by Virtue of the Cauſality of ſome original ſuperior Power; which, as we formerly prov'd, could be no leſs than Omnipotence; and that could originally reſide in none but the Eternal Being, whoſe Exiſtence is abſolutely neceſſary, and who, by Conſequence, poſſeſſes all poſſible Perfections.

And that the Divine Goodneſs has not only diſcover'd itſelf in the Creation of the Univerſe, but is ſtill no leſs concern'd in ſuſtaining or preſerving it, is equally certain. 'Tis clear from what we before obſerv'd, that a Creature can't ſubſiſt with an abſolute Independence. To exiſt thus independently, is to exiſt neceſſarily in the moſt abſolute Senſe. But abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence is by no Means agreeable to the Notion of a Creature. Therefore, ſince the Creatures continue to exiſt, it can be only by a Dependence on the Goodneſs of that omnipo-

tent and moſt beneficent Being which at firſt produced them.

But if the Univerſe was at firſt created, and is ſtill ſuſtain'd or preſerv'd by no leſs than an Almighty Power, this inſtructs us in the Idea we ought to form of the *Greatneſs*, as well as the *Goodneſs* of that Eternal Nature which is the Subject of that Power. For ſince Nothing can, without a Contradiction, be ſaid to act immediately on what is at a Diſtance, 'tis clear that ſuch a proper univerſal Suſtentation (which could be the original Effect of none but the Eternal Being) can't be ſuppos'd without an univerſal intimate *Penetration* and *Omnipreſence*.

Nor can the Suppoſition of ſuch a Penetration be reaſonably ſuſpected to be inconſiſtent with that ſubſtantial Diſtinction which is neceſſary to be aſſerted between the Creator and his Creatures. For the Creatures may, notwithſtanding, very well be different Beings and Subſtances, in as much as they are not only, for the moſt Part, entirely deſtitute of ſuch Perfections as we have diſcover'd in the Eternal Being, but are, in the general, the ultimate Subjects of ſome or other Property, which (as including Imperfection) can't but be unapplicable to Him; ſuch as Mobility, Diviſibility, *&c.*

If indeed, with *Spinoza*, we will needs confine ourſelves to the ſtricteſt Notion of *Subſtance*, and allow it to agree to nothing but what is abſolutely independent, we muſt then, with Him, baniſh all real Diverſity of Beings out of the World, and aſſert but one Subſtance or real Being, and muſt, by Conſequence, allow that there's no other Deity but the *Material Univerſe*. But ſince, on the contrary, we are aſſur'd, that beſides the original or independent Being, there are Subjects of Attributes not only very different, but contrary to His (ſuch as were mention'd above) conſequently, as we muſt, not-

notwithſtanding the moſt intimate Penetration, aſſert an immutable Diſtinction between them and the independent Being, ſo we may in the larger and no leſs proper Senſe, allow the Name of *Subſtance* to both. For to be the ultimate Subjects of peculiar Attributes or Properties, is, according to the original Signification of the Word, to be *diſtinct Subſtances*. This makes it clear, that *Spinoza* does no leſs than beg the whole Queſtion in Debate, when as a Foundation for his pretended Demonſtrations, he ſuppoſes ſo dogmatically, and without the leaſt Proof, that Nothing is properly a Subſtance but what is abſolutely independent; or, as he expreſſes it, *What exiſts in itſelf, and is conceiv'd by itſelf, or whoſe Conception does not need nor require the Conception of any other Thing in order to its being form'd* *: Which he afterwards explains, when he tells us, *'Tis the very Nature of Subſtance to exiſt, or its Eſſence neceſſarily includes Exiſtence* **. And yet it is on this too ſtrait Definition of Subſtance, together with the Suppoſition of the *Abſolute Infinity* of Extenſion, and an abſolute material *Plenum*, (both which, we conceive, will be likewiſe ſufficiently confuted in the Second Part of this Enquiry) that the main Articles of *Spinoza*'s Creed are built.

* *Per* Subſtantiam *intelligo quod in ſe eſt et per ſe concipitur, hoc eſt, id cujus Conceptus non indiget Conceptu alterius rei a quo formari debeat.* Spin. *in Eth. P.* 1. *Def.* 3.

** *Ad Naturam* Subſtantiæ *pertinet exiſtere; hoc eſt, ipſius Eſſentia involvit neceſſario Exiſtentiam. Id. Prop.* 7.

CHAP. XI.

THE next Idea of the Divine Sufficiency or Perfection with Regard to other Beings, as *actually exiſtent*, is derived from the Viſible Effects of Wiſdom to be obſerv'd in the World; and it

may, perhaps, not unfitly be expreſs'd by the Word *Government*. Under which we ſhall crave Liberty to comprehend *All the Acts of the Wiſdom of the Omnipotent Being, as moderating or governing his own Activity, both in propoſing his Ends, and in diſpoſing and managing the ſeveral Creatures agreeably to their Natures, for the moſt effectual Attainment of them.*

The *great End* of the all-wiſe Creator in the Production of the World, we may be aſſur'd, was the *univerſal Benefit and Happineſs of his Creatures according to their ſeveral Capacities.* For, as we have already prov'd, that the Perfection of his Nature was abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Propoſal of a *chief End* in the Creation, which was either *Evil*, or *leſs Good*, or *Indifferent*; ſo the ſame Perfection may convince us, that his End in creating the World, could not be any Good or Advantage to Himſelf, who was indigent of Nothing, and whoſe eſſential Happineſs was abſolutely incapable of the leaſt Acceſſion.

The *Means* which his Wiſdom has employ'd for the Attainment of his Ends, will, in the general, appear to be,

1. That moſt exact and orderly *Conſtitution* and *Diſpoſition* of the ſeveral Parts of the World. And,

2. That admirably prudent *Regulation* or *Government* of ſuch Parts of it as are furniſhed with a Principle of Life and Action. Of both which in their Order.

I. In diſcourſing on the former of theſe Means, we ſhall here omit many of the uſual Inſtances of Wiſdom and Deſign, not only becauſe they have been already ſufficiently conſider'd by others, but chiefly becauſe, being ſuch as were abſolutely neceſſary either to the Whole, or to ſuch Parts of the World to which they peculiarly belong; they ſeem not ſo fit to be objected to Men of Atheiſtick Principles as Proofs of the Divine Agency, ſince they may

may be eluded as mere neceſſary Pre-requiſites to the preſent State of Things. For, may an *Epicurean Atheiſt* ſay, We are not ſo abſurd as to imagine the Effects of Chance to have been ſubject to the rigorous Laws of Mechaniſm, or that the eternal ſelf-motive Matter of the Univerſe combin'd at the firſt into none but regular Models. For it is infinitely probable, there have been innumerable Worlds in the boundleſs Extent of Eternity, which, by reaſon of their Confuſion and Irregularity, ſucceſſively diſſolved into their original Atoms, e're a World ſo regular as this could be compos'd. And even in the preſent Frame of Things, it is not to be imagin'd (in Conſiſtence with our Principles) that the ſeveral Parts were all at the very firſt Hit ſo well diſpos'd as they now appear to be: It being equally probable, that innumerable Beings have exiſted in it, which, becauſe of ſome eſſential Defect in their Conſtitution, ſoon returned to their firſt Principles, or elſe wanting a Capacity to propagate their Species, became extinct. According to this Scheme, a Perſon of that Character will be far from admitting ſuch Regularities as Arguments of Wiſdom and Deſign; as conceiving them to have been no more than was neceſſary to the Continuance of the few caſual Effects which he ſuppoſes to have ſurvived the infinite Numbers that have long ſince periſhed.

We ſhall therefore not only omit ſuch Inſtances of Wiſdom and Deſign, but ſhall gratify our *Epicurean* ſo far, as for the preſent, to admit his Principles of neceſſary unintelligent Matter and eternal Motion. We'll even ſuppoſe (what we have likewiſe proved to be falſe) that this Motion was a capable Principle of Variety. Upon theſe Suppoſitions we ſhall not, at preſent, deny it to have been poſſible (though infinitely improbable) that after innumerable fruſtraneous Rencounters and Combinations of the Parts of

Matter, ſuch a Frame of Things might have chanc'd to reſult as ſhould have had noeſſential Defect orBlunder in it, but ſo much Order and Harmony, at leaſt, as was neceſſary to the Subſiſtence both of the whole, and its ſeveral Parts; which is indeed the utmoſt the *Epicurean* Principles are qualified to account for with the leaſt Shadow of Reaſon.

In Requital for theſe liberal Conceſſions, we ſhall only expect, that our Adverſaries will grant it to be moſt reaſonable to conclude, that a moſt wiſe and benificent Cauſe, if any ſuch, would, beſides what was neceſſary to the bare Subſiſtence of his Creatures, have left ſome Characters ofhis Wiſdom and Goodneſs impreſs'd upon 'em, ſufficient to diſtinguiſh 'em from the wild Effects of Chance: Andconſequently, that if it can be made appear that the preſent Frame of Things (beſides the Regularity neceſſary to its Subſiſtance) has ſuch Characters of Wiſdom and Goodneſs every where legible on it, they'll own it far more reaſonable to believe they were the Impreſſions and Signatures of ſuch a Being, than the random Effects of unmanag'd Motion and Impulſe.

In Expectation of this, we ſhall offer a few Things.

I. Suppoſing, that after innumerable Ages, the Matter of the Univerſe, by an internal Principle of Motion, might at laſt, by mere Chance, have combin'd into Somewhat like a World, yet it can't reaſonably be imagin'd but that this World (though it might have had no fundamental or deſtructive Error in its Conſtitution, yet) would have been full of Deformities and Irregularities in Things not eſſential to the Subſiſtence either of the whole, or of any of its Parts. Men of irreligious Principles might then, without Doubt, have been gratify'd with all the various Inſtances of Blunder, Deformity, and Irregularity that can be imagin'd in Conſiſtence with the Conſtitution of the World, and the Life of Animals.

But

But what Pains muſt they (vainly) take to diſcover one ſuch Inſtance in the preſent Frame of Things? And how diſagreeable an Employment muſt it needs be to an Atheiſt, who has any Fondneſs for his Principles, to be at the Expence of ſo much Labour to diſcover Defects and Irregularities in that, which to an unprejudic'd Obſerver, ſtill appears more admirable, and which will never fail to ſuggeſt new Arguments, ſufficient to mortify his Pride, and ſhock his Infidelity?

To inſtance only in a few Particulars, which may ſeem the moſt exceptionable.

If the Craggineſs and outward Deformity of Rocks and Mountains offend his Sight, a little Enquiry will be ſufficient to convince him, that theſe are not to be attributed to a Defect of Skill and Contrivance, but are partly owing to accidental Cauſes, (ſuch as Earthquakes, Tempeſts, Inundations, *&c.*) and partly to be aſcrib'd to Deſign. For they may be conſider'd as the Foils of Nature, whoſe Deformity is wiſely contriv'd to ſet off the Beauty of her nobler Parts.

If the minuter Parts of Nature ſeem void of Beauty and Regularity, a Microſcope will ſoon undeceive him, and raiſe his Contempt into Wonder and Aſtoniſhment. For many of theſe diſcover more ſurprizing Characters and Signatures of the Divine Wiſdom, than moſt of its larger Productions; ſince in theſe we ſee all thoſe Miracles in a narrower Compaſs, which we uſe to admire in the larger Dimenſions of the more bulky Objects. Thus if we look upon the Seeds of Plants, we ſhall find they are no other than the entire Plants in Miniature. So that their Procreation is, in Reality, nothing elſe but Nutrition and Growth of Parts. The ſame has been obſerved of the firſt Rudiments of Animals.

If

If certain Species of Animals ſeem defective, their very Defects, (which yet are only comparative) will yield an Argument of Contrivance and Deſign. For ſeveral Members would have been abſolutely uſeleſs in ſome Parts of the World (ſuppoſe in the Water, or within the Surface of the Earth) which yet it was not fit ſhould want their proper Inhabitants.

If he look beyond the Earth and its neighbouring Planets, and view the wide Spaces of the Heavens, ſhining with the united Glories of innumerable fix'd Stars, he'll ſee little Cauſe to object that theſe are not diſpos'd into regular Figures, but ſeem careleſly ſcattered like Seeds upon the Earth. For this ſeeming Diſorder may be ſaid to repreſent ſomething more noble and majeſtick, and which more ſenſibly ſtrikes the Fancy than the moſt regular Models of human Art. Beſides, 'tis plain, that neither our Station, nor the Imperfection of our Sight, will permit us to view the Heavens to the beſt Advantage. 'Tis probably but as a Point, if compar'd with the remoter Spaces of the World, which bounds our Proſpect. From whence we may have as little Reaſon to attempt to form an Idea of the whole, as an Ant to judge of the Dimenſions and Beauty of the Earth by what may be obſerv'd in a Mole-hill. But how beautiful an Idea of thoſe remoter Spaces would the new Philoſophy give him, which, with ſo much Reaſon, from the Analogy of Nature, concludes the fixed Stars to be the Centers of ſo many particular Syſtems, and as ſo many Suns to diſtribute Light and Heat to their peculiar Planets? This Hypotheſis would repreſent the Univerſe to him as an Aſſembly of innumerable Worlds, each full of the Marks of the great Creator's Wiſdom, ranged at Diſtances the moſt regular and convenient that can be imagin'd. For 'tis not doubted but the

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Diſtances of the Planets of our Syſtem are actually ſuch.

The Deformity of ſome Things conſiſts in Imagination only, proceeding from Antipathy or Averſion; ſuch as is the Hatred between Men and Serpents, *&c.*

The ſeeming Want of Beauty in others might proceed from Deſign. For did the ſame Comelineſs diſcover itſelf in all the Parts of Nature which is ſo remarkable in ſome, the Art of Man would have no Subject to work upon, or at leaſt, could not exert itſelf without the Regret of marring the Work of his Maker.

Beſides, the Diſagreeableneſs of ſome things may frequently proceed from the peculiar Make of the Senſes, or Complexions and Conſtitutions of our Bodies. For it is not unreaſonable to think, that a very exquiſite Figure and Contexture of Parts may ſometimes cauſe none of the moſt agreeable Impreſſions on our Senſes and Conſtitutions. This may appear from the regular Shapes of the minute Parts of Salts; and from the Effects of Poyſons, which are found to be very different on different Animals.

To conclude. The preſent Frame of Things ſeems ſo far from being juſtly chargeable with Blunder, Irregularity, or Deformity, that, to the leſs conſiderate, divers Inſtances of Regularity and Deſign may appear ſuperfluous. Of this Sort are the regular Shapes and the Colours of divers Stones, and particularly the curious Figures of the Leaves of Plants which are found naturally repreſented on Coal-Slate. The wiſe Author of Nature has not left even the dark Entrails of the Earth without Teſtimonies of his divine Skill, to the End that obſerving Men might no where want Motives to admire and adore him.

II. Suppoſing it might ſo have happen'd, that the Univerſe ſhould have yielded no imaginable Inſtance of

of Blunder and Deformity, yet, 'tis inconceivable, on the *Hypotheſis* of *Epicurus*, that every Thing ſhould be diſpos'd *for the Beſt*, as in the preſent Syſtem of Things. As,

1. That Nothing ſhould be without its *Uſe*. The Obſervation of the World long ſince oblig'd the Philoſophers (though, ſome of 'em, not very partial to the Cauſe of a Deity) to confeſs and lay it down for a Maxim, *That Nature does Nothing in vain.*

'Twere a ridiculous Labour to undertake a Diſcovery of the Uſefulneſs of every Thing in Nature, which is ſo various and exuberant in her Productions. It will be enough, if we can manifeſt the Uſefulneſs of ſuch Things as are ſubject to common Obſervation and Experience. For if none of theſe are without their Uſes, we have all the Reaſon in the World to conclude the ſame of all others.

We ſhall ſingle out ſuch Inſtances as may ſeem the moſt unaccountable.

Though the Obliquity of the Earth's Axis may ſeem irreconcileable to Mathematical Exactneſs, yet we are to conſider, that to this we owe the pleaſant and uſeful Variety of Seaſons, and the fitteſt imaginable Proportion of Heat and Cold, Light and Darkneſs, that is poſſibly conſiſtent with the Figure of the Earth.

If it be ſaid, the *Other Planets* are ſet at too great a Diſtance from the Earth, and by Conſequence, are the leſs capable of ſupplying the Abſence of the Sun's Light, we ſhall ſee Reaſon to believe, that this was ſo order'd to prevent a greater Inconvenience than that of Darkneſs, *viz.* the Deſtruction of Plants and Animals by exceſſive and diſorderly Tides or Elevations of the Sea, which are obſerved to depend on the Motions and Neighbourhood of thoſe great Bodies.

To

To the *Fix'd Stars* (though many of them ſeem to be made only to twinkle, and appear to be almoſt as inſignificant Members of the World, as either a Spark or a Glow-worm, yet) we partly owe the ſolid Advantages we reap by Navigation; not to mention the greater Advantages of Habitation, Convenience and Delight, which they (or at leaſt the Planets, which from the Analogy of Nature, we may probably conclude do attend them) may yield to innumerable nobler Beings than ourſelves.

To the *Mountains*, which ſome have miſrepreſented as the Wens and Excreſcences of Nature, we owe the moſt pleaſant Proſpects, the moſt delicious Wines, the richeſt and moſt uſeful Metals, Minerals, and other Foſſils, and that which is more than all, the Convenience of navigable Rivers and Fountains.

To the *Seas* we are indebted for thoſe vaſt Quantities of Vapours which refreſh and fructify the Earth, and for our ſpeedy and commodious Paſſage to the remoteſt Nations. Both which Bleſſings we muſt in a very great Degree have wanted, had the Proportion of the Waters to the dry Land been conſiderably leſs than at preſent.

If *Poiſons* are ſometimes deſtructive, yet when skilfully prepar'd, they become beneficial, and the Means to preſerve Life, when Food is inſufficient to that End.

To *Whirlwinds* and *Thunder* we owe the Diſſipation of Peſtilential Steams, and the cleanſing of the Air, the chief Inſtrument of Life.

In ſhort, if the *Air* be ſometimes the Vehicle of Infection and Blaſting; if the *Waters* be render'd unſafe by Rocks, Quickſands, and Whirlpools; if the *Fire* be prone to Conflagrations; if the *Earth* ſometimes trembles, and ſwallows up its Inhabitants; neither are theſe without their Uſes. If it was fit to implant in us the Principle of Fear, it could

could not be amiſs to place us among ſuch Objects as are apt ſometimes to excite and exerciſe it. If it be natural to Men, as Creatures, to be defectible or capable of Degeneracy, then whatever contributes to retain them within the Bounds of Duty and Allegiance, and thereby prevents a greater Evil, becomes itſelf an Advantage. But what could have been a more effectual Curb on Vice, or Spur to Virtue, than that which is apt to remind us how eaſily the Elements may be arm'd againſt us to our Deſtruction, and the very Supports of our Lives become the Inſtruments of our Maker's Juſtice?

2. 'Tis ſtill leſs conceivable on the Principles of *Epicurus*, how the ſame Thing ſhould have been diſpos'd for ſuch *Variety* of particular Uſes as may be obſerv'd in the World. To obtain a great Number of Ends by as few Means as may be, is the higheſt Point of Wiſdom. But nothing can be imagined more admirable in this Reſpect, than the preſent Frame of Things. Thus, though the human Body is compos'd of a great Variety of Parts, yet how much more various and numerous are their Uſes? How many are the Uſes of the Hand, which, directed by Reaſon, is inſtead of all other Inſtruments? How many Advantages do we owe to the Eye, the Ear, and the Tongue? And, if we take a deeper View, and look into the minuter Parts of which theſe are compounded, what can be more admirable than the Variety of Aims and Intentions that may be obſerved in each. The ſeveral Uſes of the Structure and Poſition of each ſingle Muſcle, have been computed by *Galen*, in his Book *De Formatione Fœtûs*, to be no leſs than Ten. The like may be obſerv'd with Reference to the Bones and other ſimilar Parts; but eſpecially with Reſpect to the Members, and ſuch Parts as are heterogeneous or diſſimilar. Yet it is not to be doubted, but that a

far

far leſs Degree of Uſefulneſs in many of theſe might have been ſufficient to our Subſiſtence.

3. 'Tis leſs accountable by the *Epicurean* Principles, how every thing ſhould be adapted to its particular Uſes in the *fitteſt and moſt regular Manner*. Yet what Inſtrument could be better ſuited to Viſion than the Eye, to Operation than the Hand, to Motion than the Foot or Wing? What could have been invented ſo convenient as the Diſtances, Inclinations and Celerities of the Planets of our Syſtem? What could be more nice and exact in the general, than the Adjuſtment of the Make of the Bodies, and the Degrees of all Senſations of Animals to their common and particular Circumſtances? This whoever has obſerv'd, can never enough admire. Yet neither can ſuch Exactneſs in all theſe Reſpects, be imagined to have been of abſolute Neceſſity to the Subſiſtence and Preſervation of Animals.

4. 'Tis no leſs unaccountable by the Hypotheſis of *Epicurus*, that ſo many different Parts ſhould ſo fitly and harmoniouſly conſpire to *one common Uſe*. How different are the Parts that contribute to Motion and Nutrition in Man and other Animals? Yet how fit is their Poſition, and how exquiſitely regular is their Action? But what is chiefly to be noted, is, that all theſe Parts were not abſolutely neceſſary to the Acts themſelves, but only to the Perfection of 'em. For had the leaſt Part been wanting, the Acts, though they might have been perform'd, would have been imperfect or irregular; and yet ſhould others have been added, they could not have been better'd or improv'd. A Man might have been capable of Nouriſhment without the Aſſiſtance of the Tongue or Spittle; but then it muſt have requir'd more Time, and been attended with leſs Pleaſure. A Bird might have been capable of Flight without the Direction or Steerage of its Tail; but then it would have been leſs ſteddy and difficultly go-

govern'd. And by the Addition of theſe (how inconſiderable ſoever they may ſeem in themſelves) the Acts are render'd ſo perfect, that the Wit of Man is incapable of making the leaſt Improvement.

5. 'Tis ſtill leſs accountable by the Principles of *Epicuriſm*, that almoſt every thing ſhould be dispos'd, not only for Uſe, but for *Ornament*. The Beauties of Nature need no Artifice to varniſh and ſet them off. 'Tis a ſufficient Acknowledgement of this that the moſt admir'd Artiſts never propoſe to excell, but to imitate it. The naked Eye may convince us of the exquiſite Colours and Proportions of the greater Parts of the World; and the Microſcope will ſurprize us with the far more admirable Structure and Symmetry of the leſſer. But in Nothing is this Beauty more remarkable than in Animals and Vegetables. Yet ſure none can be ſo abſurd as to imagin, that mere Colour and Proportion in the outward Make of their Bodies was of abſolute Neceſſity to their Subſiſtence. Nor is it a Jot more reaſonable to conclude, that the ſo curious Embroidery of the Veins, Arteries and Fibres, in their inward Conſtitution, was thus neceſſary. For a skilful Anatomiſt or Botaniſt knows how to ſeparate divers of thoſe Parts without the Deſtruction of the Subject. And yet ſuch Beauty and Exactneſs in the outward and inward Make of Plants and Animals, is not only every where to be met with in the World, but both are diverſify'd almoſt infinitely and beyond Imagination.

6. 'Tis equally unaccountable by that Hypotheſis, that the moſt noble and uſeful Parts of Animals ſhould always be either *well ſecur'd*, or elſe *double*. Thus the Heart and Brain, which 'twas requiſite ſhould be ſingle, are lodg'd in the interior Part of the Body, and ſtrongly fortified with the Bones of the Head and Breaſt. The Lungs and Kidneys, though likewiſe placed within the Body, yet, becauſe by reaſon

ſon of their Office more ſubject to Accidents, are double; to the End that if by Obſtructions, or any other Miſchief, the one ſhould become unſerviceable, the other might be ſufficient for the Support of Life. Thus likewiſe the Eyes, being of Neceſſity plac'd in the exterior Part, are given us by Pairs, and guarded by Eye-brows and Lids fortified with Briſtles. And not only ſo, but in ſome Animals, by whoſe Method of living they are more expos'd to Danger, we may obſerve a peculiar Proviſion for their Security, by Means of a certain horny moveable Membrane, which being tranſparent, hinders not the Sight even at the Time when it guards it from Accidents. This may be obſerv'd in Frogs, and, with ſome Variety, in divers other Animals. Yet theſe Precautions can't be pretended to have been of abſolute Neceſſity to their Subſiſtence, any more than thoſe in the former Inſtances to our own.

7. 'Tis equally unaccountable by the Principles of *Epicurus*, that all *uſeleſs Expence* of Members in Animals ſhould be avoided. As the great Author of Nature has been very bountiful with Reſpect to the Multiplicity of the Uſes of ſuch Organs or Members as he has beſtow'd, ſo he has been no leſs ſparing and frugal with Reference to the Organs themſelves. As there is no Part but what has its Uſe in the general, ſo there's none but is ſuited to the particular State and Circumſtances of the Animal to which it belongs. Thus Animals, whoſe peculiar Make or Conſtitution has qualified them to be the conſtant Inhabitants of the watry Element (which is not ſo fit for the Conveyance of Sounds) are obſerv'd to want the Inſtruments proper for the forming of Sounds. And thus Animals which have Teeth on both Jaws have but one Stomach, ſince in them more would have been ſuperfluous, and unneceſſary to Digeſtion. Whereas, had the *Epicurean* Hypotheſis been true, we might have expected to have

ſeen all imaginable Inſtances of Superfluity as well as of Defect.

But here I apprehend it may be objected, that divers of theſe Inſtances of Contrivance and Deſign are to be obſerv'd in ſuch Animals as are ſaid to be bred of Putrefaction and Moiſture.

But admitting there are ſuch Animals, and that their Make or Conſtitution yields equal Appearances of Wiſdom and Skill with that of other Beings, 'tis evidently moſt reaſonable to conclude from thence, that they likewiſe derive their Original from a wiſe or intelligent Cauſe: And ſo much the rather, becauſe Wiſdom is ever moſt illuſtrious, when it produces a regular Effect from irregular or indiſpos'd Materials. At leaſt, no Admirer of *Epicurus* can imagine ſuch a conſtant Regularity as is obſerv'd in thoſe Animals, to have been purely caſual in any tolerable Conſiſtence with his own Principles, which ſuppoſe ſuch innumerable Blunders to have happen'd at the original Coalition of the Parts of Matter.

Yet that this Opinion is a great Miſtake, is ſufficiently clear from the Diſcoveries of divers of the Moderns, who have made it appear, that there is no Animal produc'd in the preſent Courſe of Nature but by Means of ſome other Animal from ſome pre-exiſtent Seed.

Others will perhaps allow the mentioned Inſtances of Wiſdom, but will chuſe to aſcribe them to an eternal material *Anima Mundi*, or Soul of the World. But this Notion of a Soul of the World is no other than a corrupt and diſparaging Idea of God, and has already been confuted.

Laſtly, Others will poſſibly have Recourſe, with the *Spinoziſts*, to that long ſince exploded Hypotheſis of the Eternity of the preſent Frame and State of Things, and will pretend to reverſe the Edge of our Argument, by producing the Regularity and other Perfections of the World to prove it to be that neceſſa-

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ry Being which we formerly diſcover'd, and not the Effect of Wiſdom and final Cauſes. But this Conceit has likewiſe been abundantly confuted already, when we demonſtrated the Exiſtence of a Being poſſeſſed of all poſſible Perfection, in Oppoſition to the Exiſtence of abſolutely neceſſary Matter and Motion, and likewiſe the Poſſibility and Reality of a Creation. And perhaps it needs no better Confutation than that of the *Epicurean* Poet *Lucretius* himſelf, arguing from the late Beginning of Hiſtory and the Invention of Arts and Sciences.

— — *Si nulla fuit Genitalis Origo*
Terrarum et Cæli, ſemperque æterna fuere
Cur ſupra Bellum Thebanum et Funera Trojæ
Non alias alii quoque Res cecinere Poetæ?

But grant the World Eternal, grant it knew
No Infancy, and grant it ever new?
Why then no Wars our Poets Songs employ
Beyond the Siege of *Thebes*, or that of *Troy?*
CREECH.

So that upon the whole, it muſt be confeſs'd by ſuch as ever us'd the leaſt Obſervation and Reflection, that the World every where abounds with ſuch Characters and Impreſſes of inimitable Wiſdom, as make it infinitely reaſonable to conclude it to be the Creature of a perfectly wiſe and beneficent Being.

II. The other of thoſe Means employed by the Divine Wiſdom for attaining its great Ends in the Creation, we obſerved to be that admirable Regulation or Government of ſuch Parts of the World as are furniſh'd with a Principle of Life and Action. This we may perceive to be different, according to the Diverſity of its Subjects; which are either rational or irrational. The Government of the former is by

Laws, of the latter by *Inſtincts*. We ſhall begin with the latter.

If we view the Actions of brute Animals in general, we ſhall perhaps ſee little Reaſon to believe they proceed either from an innate intelligent Principle, or from the mere Mechaniſm or Texture of their Parts.

1. Not from an innate intelligent Principle. For tho' divers of thoſe Actions, to which they have a natural Inclination, bear a near Reſemblance of Contrivance and Deſign, yet their Invariableneſs ſufficiently diſcovers them not to be the Effects of Reaſon. The Productions of Reaſon are wont to be diverſify'd to an almoſt infinite Variety. If all the great Maſters in Architecture were ordered ſeverally to compoſe the moſt exquiſite Model of a Royal Palace that they could contrive, we ſhould find the Models as diſtinguiſhable as their Authors. Or ſhould the moſt celebrated Orators in the World undertake to declaim on any particular Subject, 'tis great Odds whether any two of them would be found exactly to agree in their Methods and Materials. Whereas in the moſt admir'd Performances of Brutes the Caſe is very different. Birds of the ſame Kind, in the ſame Climate, build their Neſts of the ſame Materials (if procurable) and in the ſame Form. The ſeveral Communities of Bees, without any preceding Inſtruction, frame their Habitations in the ſame Manner, as well as ſubmit to the ſame Method of Government. And (which is no leſs conſiderable to our Purpoſe) they are unimproveable as to ſuch Acts as they perform by a natural Propenſion. We may perhaps as eaſily teach a Stone in its Deſcent to deſcribe Circles, or any other the moſt regular Figures, as a Bird to build its Neſt, or a Bee to compoſe its Cells, by a new Model. And though, as to other Acts, towards which they have no natural Propenſion, ſome Brutes are capable of Improvement,

ment, yet this is no Proof of an intelligent Principle, but may be ſufficiently accounted for from the Mechaniſm of their Bodies. For frequent Exerciſe producing an Aptitude to particular Acts, we may fitly reſemble ſuch Tricks of Brutes to the Motion of the Fingers on a Muſical Inſtrument; which frequently is regular enough, though performed without the uſual Attention or Perception. Yet,

2. Mere Mechaniſm, or the Structure and Organization of their Parts, ſeems no ſufficient Cauſe of all the Operations of Brutes. This may appear from the Variableneſs of ſuch unimprov'd Actions of theirs as don't proceed from any natural Propenſion. As ſome Actions of Brutes are natural and uniform, ſo others are ſo ſtrangely diverſify'd, that they ſeem near a-kin to ſuch as are voluntary. Which Obſervation may be made not only with Reference to ſuch Animals as are ſeemingly more perfect, ſuch as Apes, Beavers, *&c.* but even with Reſpect to ſuch as are commonly reputed the meaneſt and moſt contemptible. If we look upon an Ant-hill, or into a Bee-hive, we ſhall find thoſe little Animals almoſt as differently employ'd as the Inhabitants of a City: When, at the ſame Time, they are every way beſet with the ſame Objects, and, for ought appears, receive the ſame Impreſſions from without. A ſufficient Proof that the Diverſity in their Actions ought not to be aſcrib'd to any external Impreſſions working on the Mechaniſm of their Bodies, but rather to ſuch an internal vital Principle as directs the Motions of thoſe who perform ſuch ſtrange Actions in their Sleep.

We may therefore properly enough diſtinguiſh the Principle of brutal Action by the Name of *Phantaſy*; ſince this, even in ourſelves, is found to be diſtinct from Reaſon, and yet to be a vital Principle ſufficiently diſtinguiſh'd from mere Mechaniſm.

Now as Reaſon is the governing Principle of Man, ſo *Phantaſy* is of Brutes. And as the Dictates of every Man's Reaſon, how different ſoever in Matters of leſs Concern, or greater Difficulty, are commonly uniform with Reference to Actions of the utmoſt Conſequence to the general Welfare of Mankind, and are wont to come under the Notion of *Laws*; ſo in Brutes, the Impreſſions of Phantaſy, how different and variable ſoever, in Caſes of leſs Concern, may yet be obſerv'd to be uniform, when they directly tend to the Benefit and Preſervation of their reſpective Kinds; and they are commonly call'd *Inſtincts*: Which Inſtincts are in ſome Reſpects the ſame to Brutes, that Laws are to Men and other intelligent Creatures. Such are the Inſtincts of Gratitude to Benefactors, of Aſſociation for mutual Defence, of Proviſion for their young, and the like.

And herein is the Wiſdom of the great Father of the World moſt clearly viſible, in that he has implanted ſuch an uniform Principle of Action in thoſe leſs capable Agents, which ſo directly tends to the Attainment of his moſt beneficent End, the univerſal Welfare of the vital Part of his Creation.

2. The other Method of Government inſtituted by the wiſe Author of Nature, is by *Laws*: Which Government is twofold; either of particular Perſons, or of entire Communities. Its Foundation is the abſolute Propriety of the Creator in his Creatures antecedent to Conſent or Contract. Its original Rule or Standard is the Nature and Will of the Supreme Governour. Its *immediate* Inſtrument is Reaſon; or that Faculty of comparing and connecting Truths already known, in order to the Illation and Diſcovery of other Truths before unknown.

The Exiſtence or Reality of this Government appears from hence, that there are (as we juſt now obſerved) certain uniform beneficial Dictates of Reaſon,

ſon, with Regard to Matters of the higheſt Concern to the Welfare and Happineſs of intelligent Creatures, grounded on the natural Relations of Fit and Unfit, diſcernable in Things and Actions, of which every ſuch Creature, acting like himſelf, can't be ignorant, ſuch as *Benefits are to be gratefully acknowledged and retalliated*; *the general Good is to be induſtriouſly promoted and maintain'd*, and the like. Theſe Dictates of Reaſon are qualified to be a Rule of Action and a Standard of the Conduct of Life. But whatever is qualified to be a *Rule*, with Reference to the Actions of Creatures, can be no other than a *Law* with Regard to the Deſign of the Creator, whoſe immutable Intent (as was prov'd) can't but be *the univerſal Good of his Creation*.

In the Subjects of this Government are two principal Qualifications to be diſtinguiſh'd, *Reaſon* and *Liberty*. Without the former they can't be qualified for the Knowledge of their Duty; without the latter they can't duly diſcharge it. Where a ſufficient Degree of either of theſe is wanting, or incapable of due Exerciſe, there a Government by Laws would be ludicrous and inſignificant. Where both concur in the requiſite Perfection, they found an immediate Obligation to Obedience; though poſſibly with ſome Variety proportionate to the Degree of the Perfection of each. From this Obligation reſults the Suppoſition of Rewards and Puniſhments, and of Juſtice in proportioning and diſpenſing them. Which appear to have the ſame Foundation and Reaſon with Government itſelf, *viz.* The abſolute Propriety of the Creator in his Creatures, and the ſupreme Perfection of his Wiſdom, which can't but immutably incline him to act in Conformity to the States and Capacities of his Subjects, and to that original Fitneſs and Unfitneſs which is in the Natures and Circumſtances of Things and Actions. But of this more will be ſaid anon.

Were there no natural Laws ſo univerſally promulgated, Man, the moſt noble of inferior Beings, who, by Reaſon of his great Capacity, is qualified for ſuch excellent Purpoſes, would become far more miſchievous than the Brutes. His Wit and Contrivance, when free from Obligation and Reſtraint, would probably ſoon degenerate into Craft and Circumvention. His Ambition would know no other Limits but thoſe of his Power; and an Ability to hurt would be reputed a ſufficient Warrant to do ſo. Every thing would be meaſur'd by Appetite, and all the Virtues would ſhrink into the narrow Principle of Self-intereſt: The Effects of which would be as various as either the wanton Caprices of Fancy, or the uncertain Fluctuations of the rougher Paſſions. All Men would be Tyrants to the inferior Creatures; and each Man (as far as conſiſtent with his Ability and his preſent Notion of Intereſt) would be ſo to another. And in ſhort, every thing would tend to a State of War and Confuſion, as far as the predominant Principle of Self-intereſt and the natural Inclination to Society would permit. Which makes it evident both how neceſſary ſuch Government is to the great End of the Creator (*viz.* the general Good of his Creatures,) and how unſuitable it would be to his Wiſdom (and by Conſequence, how impoſſible to him) to grant Men a Diſcharge from the Obligations of Reaſon.

In attempting to make ſome Diſcovery of the Methods of the Divine Wiſdom in that Government which is deſign'd for the Prevention of theſe Miſchiefs, we ſhall firſt endeavour to form an Idea of it as it regards Particulars, and then add ſomething with Reference to it as it regards Communities.

Though the Wiſdom of the beneficent Creator in the Government of particular Perſons as ſuch, may well be ſuppos'd in a great Degree inſcrutable by

by us, yet from the Conſideration of the Perfections of his own Nature, and the Nature and Circumſtances of the Subjects of this Government, compar'd with our Experience and the credible Tradition of former Ages, we may, queſtionleſs, by the careful Uſe of our Reaſon, attain ſome tolerable Satisfaction. In order to which we ſhall proceed by Steps, illuſtrating the Diſcoveries of Reaſon by the Conſent and Teſtimony of the Scripture Revelation.

1. *'Tis evident, as we before obſerv'd, that the great End or Deſign of the wiſe Governour of the World, is the univerſal Welfare and Happineſs of his Subjects according to their ſeveral Capacities.*

From hence we may clearly deduce the moſt noble Principle of civil Society, *viz. That Men are not born for themſelves alone, but that in all proper Caſes they ought to ſeek the Benefit and Happineſs of others to the utmoſt of their Power.* For it is an indiſputable Point, that the higheſt Perfection of Creatures cannot but conſiſt in the neareſt poſſible Conformity to the natural Perfections, as well as Will of their Creator, who is the moſt perfect of Beings. But this Conformity can't be without the Practice of whatever is good and virtuous, and beneficial. For that the Perfections of God immutably incline him to act in the beſt Manner, was prov'd when we treated of the Divine Liberty: And that the chief End of all the divine external Acts was the univerſal Good of the Creatures, was ſhewn in the Beginning of this Chapter.

2. *As it is the Property of perfect Wiſdom not only to propoſe the beſt Ends, but to chuſe and employ the fitteſt and moſt conducive Means, ſo we need not doubt but the wiſeſt of Beings makes Uſe of ſuch Methods of Government as are moſt conducive to his great End* (the general Happineſs of his Creatures) *in Conſiſtence with the Perfection of his own Nature, and with the States and Capacities of his Subjects.*

3. Con-

3. *Conſequently, we can't ſuppoſe his Intention to have been to expoſe the Happineſs of any of his Creatures to a perpetual Hazard: Since this would be to expoſe his own great Deſign to the continual Danger of a Defeat.*

4. *Therefore, ſince intelligent Creatures are under a natural Obligation to the Laws of Reaſon, and ſince their ſupreme Happineſs could not but depend on their free Obedience to thoſe Laws (as was prov'd;) and ſince the Exerciſe of Freedom or Liberty in imperfect Agents could not be without a Poſſibility of Diſobedience, it can't be ſuppos'd to have been the Deſign of the wiſe Governour of the World always to ſuſpend their ſupreme Happineſs on ſo precarious and hazardous a Condition as that of a Free Obedience.*

5. *Yet a total Determination or Neceſſitation of intelligent Creatures to Acts of Obedience, is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the very Notion of Government by Laws, enforc'd by Rewards and Puniſhments, and conſequently with the great Creator's Wiſdom in qualifying them for ſuch Government.*

This is agreeable not only to Scripture and Reaſon, but to Experience, and ſufficiently accounts for the Permiſſion of Sin in the World.

6. *Conſequently, whatever Opinion ſuppoſes ſuch Neceſſitation and is totally deſtructive of Liberty, is alike inconſiſtent with the Notion of Government by Laws, and the Nature of the great and beneficent Creator.*

Such, it is humbly conceiv'd, is the Opinion of an abſolute and particular Foreknowledge, as ſuppos'd to be founded on particular abſolute Decrees of all Events both good and Evil, and an univerſal efficacious Concurſe. For this plainly infers an univerſal external Neceſſitation, which can't but be entirely deſtructive of that Liberty or Freedom of Action in the Creatures which is requiſite in a State of Tryal.

As for ſuch who ſuppoſe an abſolute particular eternal Foreknowledge of all Events as future without

out

out founding it on abſolute Decrees and an efficacious Concurſe in order to their Accompliſhment; though their Opinion ſeems both more pious, and not ſo directly deſtructive of the Creature's Liberty, yet it is perhaps equally indefenſible. For, (not again to mention its Inconſiſtence with the Divine Abſolute Independence, nor to inſiſt on its being deſtructive of the Divine Decrees, which by this Suppoſition ſeem to be render'd unneceſſary; ſince it can't be imagin'd to what End a Thing ſhould be decreed, if its future Exiſtence would have been certain, and certainly foreknown, though no ſuch Decree had been) this at leaſt is clear, that whatever is certainly or determinately foreknown, is foreknown to be fix'd or determin'd. But 'tis no leſs clear, that all ſuch Events as entirely depend on human Liberty, (whoſe very Nature in the preſent State we have proved to include Indetermination) can have had no fixing or pre-determining Cauſe, and by Conſequence cannot be affirm'd to have been Objects of a certain or determinate Foreknowledge without a Contradiction.

It can certainly be no Impiety to aſſert, that Things can be foreknown only in ſuch a Manner as their Natures admit; particularly, that Effects can be no otherwiſe foreknown than in their Cauſes. If the Cauſe be neceſſary (or certainly determin'd to produce its Effect) then indeed the Effect may be certainly or determinately foreknown, *i. e.* it may be foreknown as certain or determin'd to exiſt. For Inſtance, when we ſay an Eclipſe is certainly foreknown, we can only mean that it is determined by the fix'd or eſtabliſh'd Order and Motions of the Heavenly Bodies. But if, on the contrary, the Cauſe be properly contingent, or ſuch as is not fixed, but either may or may not produce an Effect (ſuch a Cauſe as is every Man who is completely free or indetermin'd to act) then the Effect being con-

contingent, indetermin'd, or uncertain, can be no otherwiſe known than as contingent, indetermin'd, or uncertain. For to ſay an indetermin'd or uncertain Event was certainly or determinately foreknown, or (which is the ſame) was foreknown as certain or determin'd, is to ſay that it was foreknown not as itſelf but as another, *i. e.* that it was not foreknown at all, even while we intend to aſſert it to have been foreknown.

'Tis true, ſome are pleas'd to object, that a certain abſolute Foreknowledge makes no Neceſſity of the Things foreknown. But 'tis conceiv'd, that tho' it does not make, yet it ſuppoſes Neceſſity, and is therefore inconſiſtent with human Liberty. For as a certain Knowledge of Things preſent is founded on a *preſent* Neceſſity of their Exiſtence (ſince 'tis certain, that what Is, cannot but Be while it Is) ſo an abſolutely certain Knowledge of Things future muſt pre-ſuppoſe and be founded on a *Future* Neceſſity of Things: For there's no other Foundation of an abſolute Certainty but Neceſſity. Wherefore, a certain abſolute Foreknowledge of all Things and Actions, if admitted, can't but pre-ſuppoſe an abſolute future Neceſſity of all Things and Actions, and by Conſequence, the Suppoſition of ſuch Foreknowledge can't be defended, without aſſerting an abſolute and univerſal Fatality; which, (as Dr. *Clarke** freely confeſſes,) "Abſolutely deſtroys all "Religion and Morality, and tends more to the "Diſhonour of God, than the denying him a "Foreknowledge, which (on Suppoſition that ſuch "Foreknowledge and human Liberty are inconſi-"ſtent) would be impoſſible, and a Contradiction to "conceive him to have; and the Denial of which "would, in ſuch Caſe, be no more a Diminution "of his Omniſcience, than the denying him the

* *Demonſtration*, p. 109.

"Power

" Power of working Contradictions, is taking away " his Omnipotence.

What the Doctor adds concerning the eternal Certainty even of free Actions, grounded on the eternal or neceſſary Truth of all Propoſitions relating even to contingent or indetermin'd Events, has been already conſider'd, *Chap.* vii. where we prov'd, that whatever Truth ſuch Propoſitions contain'd, could be no other than conditional, and by Conſequence, no ſufficient Foundation of an abſolute or certain Foreknowledge.

Nor can the certain Foreknowledge of contingent or indetermin'd Events, [illegible] prov'd from the Scripture Prophecies. [illegible] the Prophecies may [illegible] Way are other Revelations of what is [illegible] a Property in our Nature [illegible] that we are [illegible] Power of [illegible] Purpoſes [illegible] Agents [illegible] Deſigns [illegible] God. But [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

dingly *Mollerus* thus paraphraſes it, *Deus intelligit Cogitationes noſtras procul, &c.* God underſtandeth our Thoughts afar off, *i. e.* though he may ſeem to be far abſent, and to neglect human Affairs, yet he does not ſo reſide in the Heavens as not to ſee what is done upon Earth. By the ſame Manner of ſpeaking he is ſaid to *look down from Heaven and behold the Sons of Men.*

And then, as for that Challenge made to the falſe Deities, *Iſaiah* xli. 23. *Shew the Things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods*; the moſt natural Senſe of the Words in their Connexion, appears to be this: *By changing the ordinary Courſe of Nature, and determining and foretelling Things otherwiſe in themſelves contingent, give Proof of ſuch Sovereignty and actual Dominion in the World, as is the incommunicable Prerogative of that God on whom all Things depend.* So that it ſeems only to eſtabliſh God's Sovereignty in decreeing future Things; not any natural determinate Foreknowledge of purely contingent Events. This will perhaps appear by conſidering the Inſtances given in the preceding Verſes, ſuch as *the opening of Rivers in High Places, and Fountains in the Midſt of the Valleys, &c.* which are all ſo many Inſtances of God's Sovereignty over the World, and his ſole Prerogative of influencing or changing the Order of Nature at his Pleaſure.

7. *A Determination to Future Obedience (in a Manner agreeable to the Nature of an intelligent Creature) conſequent on a Free Obedience in a State of Tryal, is highly conducible to the End, and therefore moſt ſuitable to the Character of the wiſe and beneficent Governor of the World.*

The Suppoſition of ſuch a Determination as this, not only ſecures and promotes the great End of the moſt beneficent Creator, but admits a ſufficient Uſe of the Creature's Liberty. And as it is very conſonant to Reaſon, ſo it is exactly agreeable to the

Chriſtian

Chriſtian Scheme. For the Scriptures ſufficiently intimate, that ſuch of thoſe nobler Beings (known to us by the Name of *Angels*) who preſerv'd their Innocence in a State of Tryal, were favour'd with a Confirmation in Obedience and Felicity. And we are aſſur'd that this will be the happy Caſe of ſuch other intelligent Beings, as ſhall make a right Uſe of their Liberty in the Time of their reſpective Tryals.

8. *'Tis very agreeable to the Wiſdom of the Supreme Governour, that the State of Tryal ſhould be of ſome Latitude, to yield Room to Repentance and Amendment in Caſe of Tranſgreſſion.*

This is ſufficiently conſiſtent with the Scripture Revelation. For there's no neceſſary Reaſon to conclude, that the Apoſtate Spirits (though in very different Circumſtances from our own *) were doom'd to Unhappineſs immediately on their firſt Rebellion. And 'tis manifeſtly agreeable to our Experience, whoſe whole Life appears to be ordinarily no other than a State of Tryal. For that it is not the final State of Rewards and Puniſhments, is moſt evident from the preſent unequal Diſtribution of Things; which is in Reality ſuch as has given Occaſion to ſome either to doubt of, or to deny any divine Government. For the Truth is, there can be no preſent Government of the World at all, or at leaſt it cannot be worthy of God, if there be no equal Retribution to be expected in a future State. But that there really is a Government of the World, and that this Government is worthy of God, has been already prov'd. Therefore ſuch a State of Retribution is certain. To make this yet more clear, the Deſign of God in creating and governing the World was the Good of his Creatures. The Good and Happineſs of intelligent Creatures was plainly connected

* See *The Chriſtian Religion founded on Reaſon.*

with

with a Practice agreeable to the Divine Nature and Will. But such Practice, in the present State, is in many Cases so far from rendring Men more happy, that it rather exposes them to greater Miseries and Infelicities than others. The plain Inference is, there must be a future State of Retribution, where the great Creator will sufficiently attain his original End or Design, and where his intelligent Creatures shall receive according to their several Practices and Deserts; and by Consequence the present State is the State of Tryal, and not the final State of Rewards and Punishments.

This will assist us in unravelling divers Intricacies in the Conduct of the Divine Government. For if this Life of Men here upon Earth be no other than a State of Tryal, we may cease to wonder that ill Men are not always punish'd here, nor the virtuous rewarded; or that the impious so frequently abound with secular Advantages, while the virtuous are distress'd and the Objects of Contempt. For present Prosperity or Adversity can't, on that Supposition, be either good or evil in themselves, but may be indifferently either the one or the other, according to their Aspect and Influence on the future State: Which, as is most evident, may be very different, as they are either abus'd or improv'd.

'Tis therefore very consistent with the Wisdom of the supreme Governour, to allow his Subjects (as he usually does) the free Use of their Faculties, and to suffer Effects to follow the Influence of their immediate Causes, without frequently interrupting the establish'd Order of Nature. 'Twas very fit that Riches, Honour, and Reputation, should usually be the Effects of Industry and prudent Management; and that the contrary Effects should proceed from the contrary Causes, without any peculiar Regard to Persons or Circumstances. For Prudence and Industry are political Virtues, and naturally tend to the Good

Good of Society, though they may be ſometimes exercis'd by Perſons morally vicious. But indeed when Induſtry degenerates into Rapine and Violence, and Prudence into Craft and Circumvention, then though their Permiſſion is ſtill very agreeable to our Notion of the divine Government, (as being the Government of free Agents) yet it may be ſometimes very ſuitable to the Wiſdom of the beneficent Governour of the World to interpoſe, and to cauſe ſome Variety in the uſual Series of Events. But Experience aſſures us that this does not always happen; and but very ſeldom when theſe Vices don't ſo immediately tend to the Deſtruction of Society. For as to the Actions of particular Perſons towards each other in this preſent Scene of Things, we find 'em, for the moſt Part, to reſemble the celebrated Games among the *Greeks*; wherein every Man was permitted to exert his whole Skill and Activity, and in caſe of Victory, received his Reward, not according to the Quality of the Perſon, but that of the Performance.

9. *An Interruption of the State of Tryal by a Determination to certain Acts, which the Divine Wiſdom may have judg'd fit to be decreed for the general Good either of the whole World, or of entire Communities, is ſometimes very ſuitable to our Idea of this Divine Government.*

Of this Sort, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, are all ſuch human Actions as may be certainly prov'd to have been abſolutely foretold in Scripture. For though ſome of thoſe Actions, conſider'd in their immediate Circumſtances, without Regard to their remoter Conſequences, may ſeem to have been morally evil, yet, with all due Submiſſion, it appears to have been in no ſort inconſiſtent with the Perfection of the ſupreme Governour to pre-ordain them in order to a much greater Good. For though we, who are naturally ſubject to a ſuperior Will, we, who have

no Share in the ſupreme Government of the World, nor any ſufficient Capacity to judge of or to determine the Tendencies and Conſequences of Actions in their full Extent, may not ordain an Act, which, conſider'd in its immediate Circumſtances, appears to be Evil, that Good may come of it; yet, it's conceiv'd the Caſe is widely different with reſpect to the ſupreme Governour.

This, if it can be ſet in a due Light, will perhaps prove no inconſiderable Expedient towards the removing of many Difficulties which have caſt ſo thick a Darkneſs on divers Acts of the Divine Government. To which End I ſhall humbly offer the following Remarks.

I. 'Tis clear, that the Notion even of *moral natural* Evil does not conſiſt in its being any real Detriment to the great Governour of the World. When therefore we meet with ſuch Expreſſions in the Scripture Revelation as ſeem to aſcribe to him the Paſſions of Anger and Revenge, or to intimate that Sin is any Diſturbance to his Repoſe and Felicity, 'tis agreed by all ſober Reaſoners, that they are to be underſtood as ſpoken in Condeſcenſion to human Capacities.

II. 'Tis agreed, that no human Act is in itſelf conſider'd either morally good or evil, but indifferent. If therefore any ſuch Act becomes either good or evil, it muſt be on account of its proper Circumſtances and natural Conſequences; or by reaſon of the Relations it acquires. Now though the original Reaſon why the Notion of moral *natural* Evil becomes affixed to any particular Relations of natural Acts, is not the mere arbitrary Pleaſure of the Deity, but his very Nature, yet 'tis that Perfection of his Nature which muſt be conceiv'd to have an immediate Influence on the Government of the World, and to be the Standard of all moral Evil whatever: Which Perfection we have obſerv'd to be his *Wiſdom*.

There-

Therefore, in forming a Notion of the moral Good or Evil of any particular Act, we muſt, it ſeems, conſider it in all its Relations, or view it in all its proper immediate Circumſtances, and remoteſt natural Conſequences with reference to this governing Perfection of the great Lord of the World, *viz.* his Wiſdom. According to which Method I conceive, That,

1. If the Act, both in its proper immediate Circumſtances and remoteſt natural Conſequences be agreeable to the Notion, and conducive to the Ends of the divine or moſt perfect Wiſdom, 'tis then in the compleateſt Senſe morally good, or fit to be ordain'd.

2. If the Act be diſagreeable in its proper immediate Circumſtances to the Notion of the divine Wiſdom, and yet conducive to its Ends in its remoteſt natural Conſequences, then though it comes not up to the compleat Idea of moral Goodneſs or Fitneſs, yet 'tis not to be reputed morally evil, or abſolutely unfit to be ordain'd by an Agent not ſubject to any Obligation to the contrary. But,

3. If in the laſt Place, an Act be neither agreeable to the Notion of the Divine Wiſdom, nor conducive to, but deſtructive of its great and moſt beneficent Deſigns in the Government of the World, then 'tis morally evil, or abſolutely unfit.

So that moral Evil appears to have two diſtinct Notions; *viz.* a Diſſimilitude or Diſagreeableneſs to the governing Perfection of the great Lord of the World (his Wiſdom,) and likewiſe a Tendency to fruſtrate his moſt beneficent Ends in the Exerciſe of it: Of which only the latter has immutably the Nature of moral Evil.

III. It ſeems clear to me, that *Holineſs* and *Juſtice* (tho' uſually conceiv'd as diſtinct Perfections eſſential to the Idea of God) are not, in Reality, different from his *Wiſdom* diverſly conſider'd; and by

Conſequence are not to be the Standards of our Judgment of moral Evil as diſtinguiſhed from that.

If we duly reflect, we ſhall perhaps ſee Reaſon to conclude, that by the divine *eſſential Holineſs*, Nothing elſe can be meant but the general indetermin'd Rectitude or Perfection of the Divine *Wiſdom*, whereby the Deity immutably perceives and inclines to what is beſt and fitteſt in governing the World. For this is plainly the Reaſon of his Abhorrence or Diſapprobation of moral Evil, as being directly contrary to the Ends of his Government: Which Diſapprobation is uſually conceiv'd as the immediate Reſult of his Holineſs.

And then as for the Attribute of *Juſtice*, it can be no other, it's conceiv'd, than the Divine *Wiſdom* conſider'd as particularly determin'd to an equal Retribution. For ſuch Determination is plainly the Reaſon why the great Governour of the World is conceiv'd to be uncapable either of acquitting the impenitently guilty, or of finally puniſhing the purely innocent: Which is the compleat Notion of *Juſtice*, as concern'd in the preſent Argument.

The conſidering *Holineſs* and *Juſtice* as eſſential Properties in the Deity diſtinct from his Wiſdom, has not been without its Inconveniencies. Particularly, this appears to have confirm'd many in the moſt rigid Predeſtinarian Principles. For imagining it to be neceſſary that all the Divine Properties or Attributes ſhould be glorified in the Creatures, and looking upon *Holineſs* and *Juſtice* as two diſtinct eſſential Attributes, many (quite contrary to the Tendency of our preſent Argument) have proceeded ſo far as to infer, that 'twas neceſſary Sin ſhould be ordain'd for the Glorification of the Holineſs and Juſtice of God in puniſhing it.*

From

* Maccov. Diſp. 17. p. 11. *Locus Miſerecordiæ et Juſtitiæ manifeſtandæ nullus fuiſſet futurus, ſi Peccatum non extitiſſet.*

Pſ-

From this Account of the Nature of *moral Evil*, as well as of *Holineſs* and *Juſtice*, it ſeems clearly to follow, that though the Supreme Governour can't, in Conſiſtence with his *Holineſs* and *Juſtice*, (*i. e.* with the Perfection and Exerciſe of his Wiſdom) pre-ordain an Act morally evil, or an Act both in its immediate Circumſtances and natural Conſequences, directly tending to fruſtrate the great Ends of his Wiſdom in the Government of the World, yet to ſuppoſe him to pre-ordain an Act or Event diſagreeable in its immediate Circumſtances, but, at the ſame time conducive to thoſe Ends in its remoter natural Conſequences, is no Way inconſiſtent with the Character of the moſt *Juſt* and *Holy* (*i. e.* of the *wiſeſt*) of Beings.

More particularly, ſuch a Pre-ordination can't, 'tis conceiv'd, be inconſiſtent with the *Holineſs* of God (or with the indetermin'd Rectitude or Perfection of his *Wiſdom*) ſince hereby he only uſes the moſt conducive Means for the Attainment of the beſt Ends: Which is ſo far from being contrary to his Wiſdom, that it yields us the moſt perfect Idea of it.

Nor can this be inconſiſtent with his *Juſtice* (or his Wiſdom conſider'd as determin'd to an equal Retribution) ſince in caſe of the Pre-ordination of ſuch an Act or Event for the general Good, the particular Inſtrument or Inſtruments can't merely on that Account be capable of Guilt, or liable to Puniſhment.

To clear this, we may ſingle out the famous Example of *Judas*.

As for the Act of *Judas* in betraying his Maſter, the Scripture ſays, 'twas not barely by the Divine

Piſcator contra Schaffman, Theſ. 34. *Falſum eſt Deum non opus habere Peccatore,* ——— *opus eo habet ad patefaciendam Gloriam ſuam,* viz. *tum Gloriam Juſtitiæ in eo non reſipiſcente damnando, tum Gloriam Miſerecordiæ in eo reſipiſcente ſervando,* &c.

Permiſſion, but *by the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledge of God.* And not only ſo, but our Saviour is affirmed to have foreknown who ſhould betray him, and at what Time. But how may we conceive this Predetermination both of the Act and the Perſon to have been conſiſtent with our Notion of the Divine Government? If we conſider the Act in its immediate Circumſtances and nearer Conſequences, 'tis certain there could be nothing more diſagreeable to the Perfection of the Divine Wiſdom, nor more directly tending to fruſtrate its great Ends in the Government of the World. If then the Determination of *Judas* to ſuch an Act was nevertheleſs conſiſtent with this governing Property of the ſupreme Lawgiver, (as all who believe the Scriptures muſt allow) it follows that it could be on no other Account than of its remoter Conſequences, than which none could be more conducive to the univerſal Good of Mankind, nor conſequently to the Attainment of the great Ends of the Divine Wiſdom in the Government of the World.

If it be ſaid, that this was a moſt impious Act of *Judas*; I own it became ſo by the accidental Circumſtances of Malice and Covetouſneſs, to which he was remarkably inclin'd; as the Scripture but too plainly intimates, by ſtiling him a *Thief* and a *Devil*; which Circumſtances, none, I hope, will imagine to have been the Effects of the Divine Pre-ordination. So that the Caſe of *Judas*, in this Reſpect, appears to have been much the ſame with that of the *Iſraelites* on another Occaſion. Theſe God had commanded to chaſtiſe the People of *Judah*. Which Commiſſion they readily executed; and in ſo doing they can't be ſaid to have been criminal. Yet 'tis plain they became ſo by the accidental Mixture of Malice and Revenge in the Execution. Accordingly we find they were ſeverely reprimanded by the Prophet,

Prophet, who told them, they had *deſtroyed their Brethren with a Rage that reach'd to Heaven.*

And though *Judas* himſelf, when he brought again the thirty Pieces, ſaid, *I have ſinned in that I have betrayed the innocent Blood*; yet this is no ſufficient Proof of his being liable to Puniſhment merely for the Act of Betraying. The Caſe of *Judas* being ſo peculiar, we may eaſily conceive he was ignorant of his State with Reference to the Divine Decree. Wherefore finding a great degree of Malice and Covetouſneſs to have accompanied his Action, he was apt to imagine theſe to have been the Principles from whence it originally proceeded.

If the Apoſtle *Peter* calls the thirty Pieces the *Reward of Iniquity*; this can prove nothing. For being the Reward of an Action, attended with ſuch Impieties as by Accident render'd it a ſinful Act, they might very well be term'd *the Reward of Iniquity.*

But, may ſome ſay, Is not Sin defin'd by the Apoſtle to be the *Tranſgreſſion of the Law?* And was not the betraying of an innocent Perſon to Death ſuch a Tranſgreſſion? I anſwer, The Law was deſign'd as a Rule to ſuch only as are free Agents; and conſequently, in any Caſe wherein an Agent is unavoidably depriv'd of Freedom, his Act can't juſtly be reputed a Tranſgreſſion. But in this Caſe *Judas* ſeems to have been no free Agent, but a mere Inſtrument irreſiſtibly actuated by an external Influence; and therefore this could not, ſimply conſider'd, be reputed his own Act; nor could he by Conſequence, tranſgreſs, or be liable to Puniſhment merely on this Account. And as for the Sovereign of the World, who appears to have abſolutely decreed the Event, and permitted the Tempter to influence the Act of *Judas*, 'twas no Injuſtice in him; ſince he had an abſolute Right of Dominion not only over *Judas*, but over the Bleſſed *Jeſus* as

his Creature. Such Pre-ordination was neither contrary to the Perfection of God, as proceeding from a moſt wiſe and beneficent Intention; nor to his reveal'd Will, which we may well conclude was deſign'd as a Standard of Action in ordinary Caſes only, or ſuch wherein the Creatures are alone concerned; not in Caſes ſo peculiar as this, wherein the Deity was ſo particularly intereſted.

'Tis confeſs'd, the Apoſtle *Peter* ſtiles the Act of *Judas* a *Tranſgreſſion*. But this, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, can't well be meant of the merely executing that which was pre-determin'd to be done, and to which he was not only pre-ordain'd, but ſtrongly influenc'd by the Tempter; but rather of his executing it in ſo criminal a Manner, *viz.* with a preconceiv'd Malice and habituate Covetouſneſs. And the like may perhaps be ſaid of the Perſons who were chiefly inſtrumental to our Saviour's Crucifixion, who, as the ſame Apoſtle ſays, had by *wicked Hands* crucified and ſlain him.

If *Judas* be term'd *the Son of Perdition*, this may not import his being predeſtinated to eternal Perdition merely on account of betraying his Lord; an Act, in reſpect of which he appears not to have been free. On the contrary, if conſider'd, in its Connection, it appears to import no more than his being pre-ordain'd to periſh, or to be loſt out of the Number of the Diſciples, in the ſame Senſe as thoſe who are loſt out of the Number of Mankind, are ſaid to periſh from the Earth.

If our Saviour ſays, *Luke* xxii. 22. *The Son of Man goeth as was determined, but Woe to that Man by whom he is betray'd, &c.* Yet even this can't neceſſarily import the Sinfulneſs and Guilt of the pure Act of Betraying, but may very well be conceiv'd to be ſpoken with Reference to thoſe concomitant Sins of Malice and Coyetouſneſs which our Saviour

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ſaw already harbour'd in the Breaſt of *Judas*, who was then upon the Point of putting it in Execution.

To conclude, If our Saviour, *John* xix. 11. ſpeaking to *Pilate*, tells him, *Thou couldeſt have no Power over me, unleſs it was given thee from above; therefore he that deliver'd me unto thee hath the greater Sin*; This is agreed by *Expoſitors* to be meant of the High Prieſt *Caiaphas* (who immediately deliver'd *Jeſus* to *Pilate*) and not of *Judas*. Which *Caiaphas*, by maliciouſly delivering him, may well be ſaid to have had greater Sin than *Pilate*, who with only a criminal Weakneſs and Compliance, order'd his Execution; eſpecially ſince *Pilate*, without the Action of *Caiaphas* could have had no Power over him.

Whoever oppoſes this Hypotheſis, will find it difficult to propoſe another ſo agreeable to our Notion of Juſtice, and ſo conſiſtent with the Honour of the Chriſtian Revelation.

But though this appears to have been the Caſe of *Judas*, and perhaps of the Perſons chiefly concern'd in our Saviour's Crucifixion; yet a like Pre-determination is not neceſſary to be ſuppoſed with Regard to all other Actions and Events appearing in their immediate Circumſtances to be evil, which are mentioned in the Scripture Prophecies (much leſs with Regard to all Actions and Events whatſoever, as ſome aſſert) but only in Caſes extraordinary, and of great Importance to Mankind.

'Tis agreed that the Scripture Prophecies don't always import a determinate Certainty of the Event. A Prophecy, though abſolutely and particularly expreſs'd, may yet include a tacit Condition on which the Event is ſuſpended. Such, for Inſtance, was the Prophecy of *Jonah* againſt *Nineveh*. And ſuch was that of the Captivity of the *Jewiſh* Nation, and the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*. Though the Terms were abſolute, yet a tacit Condition, (*viz.* Repentance) is known to have

have been imply'd. From whence we may infer it as a good Rule in interpreting Prophecies that foretel Impieties and Judgments in all ordinary Cases, that a Condition is always to be understood tho' not expreſs'd.

Some other Prophecies relating to impious Actions, are no more than Revelations of what God, the Searcher of Hearts, knew to be actually exiſtent. For Example, When *David* ask'd Counſel of God, whether he ſhould go down to *Keilah*, and whether in that Caſe the Men of the Place would deliver him up to *Saul?* God anſwers, *They will deliver thee up.* This needs not ſignify that God had decreed their delivering him; but only that he knew their Purpoſe, at that Time, was to deliver him up, if he went. So when *Ezekiel* received his Commiſſion to terrify the *Jews* from their evil Practices, God immediately adds, *The Houſe of Iſrael will not hearken to thee, i. e.* I know their preſent Reſolution is obſtinately bent not to obey. For if theſe Words muſt be underſtood to import a Certainty of the Event by Virtue of a preceding Decree, then both the Prophet's Commiſſion, and thoſe moſt pathetick Invitations *to turn and live*, which were afterwards made them in the Name of God, would be ſufficiently unaccountable. And thus, as to the Prophecy of the Riſe and Progreſs of *Antichriſt*, perhaps it does not neceſſarily import any more than that the Searcher of Hearts, who knew the *Myſtery of Iniquity* began already to work (as the Apoſtle intimates) would, partly for a Tryal and Warning to his People, and partly as a Puniſhment to the Offenders, if they obſtinately perſiſted, permit the Evil to proceed till it might meet its appointed Puniſhment. Which Sort of Prophetical Threatnings may be conſider'd as the Means which the ſupreme Governour (as a moſt wiſe Phyſician) ſometimes uſes, either for the Prevention or Cure of thoſe Diſeaſes

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to which the whole political Body, or any Part of it is expos'd: Such Prophetical Threatnings having a more extenſive Influence than even Miracles; as tending more effectually to retain Men in their Duty to the End of the World. And though, in the *Revelations*, we have a Declaration of the Methods deſign'd by the Lord of the World for executing his Judgments on *Antichriſt* and his Followers in a certain Order, according to ſeveral Periods; yet this perhaps, as in the former Caſe, may have been only foretold conditionally, (*viz.* in caſe the Evil ſhould ſpread and become inveterate;) or the Prophecy might not be deſign'd to take Effect in every Reſpect (at leaſt not with Reſpect to the continued Impieties and final Deſtruction of the Offenders) unleſs their Obſtinacy ſhould provoke the beneficent Deity no otherwiſe to put a Stop to thoſe Impieties, than by their Deſtruction at the Time prefix'd. For though it be ſaid to be a Revelation of Things *which muſt ſhortly come to paſs*; yet theſe Words are not more abſolute than thoſe of God by the Prophet *Jonah*, who denounced Deſtruction to the *Ninevites within forty Days*, in theſe Terms, *Nineveh ſhall be deſtroy'd.*

To conclude this Head: As it appears by what has been obſerv'd, that an Interruption of the State of Tryal by a Determination (in ſome extraordinary Caſes) to Acts ſeeming in their immediate Circumſtances evil, may be ſufficiently conſiſtent with the Wiſdom of the Divine Government, ſo a like Interruption by a Reſtraint from Actions really evil, or by a Determination to ſuch as are in the completeſt Senſe good, may in ſome particular Caſes be highly worthy of it: Of both which the Scriptures yield ſufficient Inſtances.

10. *An obſtinate and impenitent Offender, in ſuch a State of Tryal, can have no ſufficient Plea againſt the Ex-*

Execution of the Penalty which the juſt Governour of the World may have ordained for his Offence.

Not the Imperfection of his Nature. For to be perfect and immutable are the incommunicable Prerogatives of the independent Being. Imperfection is as eſſential to Creatures as Dependence: And ſhould it be admitted as a Plea againſt Puniſhment in caſe of Tranſgreſſion, it might as well be admitted as an Argument againſt all Government by Laws. On the other Side, 'tis manifeſt, that a Creature furniſh'd with Reaſon, joyn'd with the Knowledge of his Duty, and with Liberty to act it, is a ſufficiently perfect or capable Subject of ſuch Government. If ſuch a Creature offend, it muſt be either through a culpable Inadvertence in a greater or leſſer Degree, or elſe through an unreaſonable Obſtinacy. But neither of theſe ought to be reſolv'd entirely into the Imperfection of his Nature, but chiefly into a wilful Degeneracy and Depravation of it. Yet it muſt, I think, be confeſs'd, that if a Creature is under the Influence of invincible Ignorance, or if his Reaſon and Liberty are otherwiſe, without his Fault, incapable of due Exerciſe, he appears in theſe Circumſtances to be no capable Subject of Government by Laws, and by Conſequence to be neither capable of Sin, nor liable to Puniſhment. Whoever ſhall aſſert the contrary, muſt by unavoidable Conſequence, ſubject the very irrational Beings to the Laws and Duties of Religion. For to have neither Reaſon nor Liberty, or having them, to be in any Caſe unavoidably depriv'd of their due Exerciſe, are in Effect the ſame.

Nor can a mere *Dependence on the Suſtentation of his Maker* be juſtly pleaded to excuſe a Creature from ſuch a Penalty. 'Tis indeed to be confeſs'd, that if the Doctrine of an univerſal Suſtentation ſhould argue the Deity to be the immediate Principle of all Action, and by Conſequence ſhould be found to exclude

clude a self-determining Power in the Creatures, the very Notion of Government by Laws must cease. For if the whole intelligent Creation have no proper Action of their own, but are entirely manag'd and actuated by the Divine Power, then the most serious Affairs of the World must be regarded as a mere ludicrous Scene or Dance of Puppets. A Set of Beings capable of the Knowledge of their Duty, but quite destitute of the Ability to act it, must be less capable Subjects of Government by Laws, than the intelligent Trees in the fabulous *Dodona*'s Grove.

But if the Sustentation of a Creature's Being should be imagin'd to be inconsistent with its possessing a self-determining Power in Order to Action, it must be either on Supposition that the Deity *could not* produce and preserve such a distinct Power in a Creature in Consistence with such a Sustentation, or else that he *would not*. As for the former Supposition, 'tis sufficient to observe, that no good Reason can be assign'd why the Production of a distinct *Power* should be thought less possible than the Creation of a distinct *Substance*. And as the Deity sustains or preserves the *Substance* of his Creatures so that it still remains (notwithstanding the most intimate Penetration) sufficiently distinguish'd from his own (as was prov'd ;) so by Parity of Reason, he may as well be suppos'd to sustain or preserve the *Power* of a Creature so as that it may still retain its Distinction and Capacity of becoming a proper Principle of Action. And as for the latter Supposition, *viz.* that the Deity *would not* produce and preserve such a self-determining Power in a Creature; 'tis a sufficient Confutation only to remark, that it's irreconcileable to the Notion of a perfectly wise Being (such as is the Deity) to suppose him to act without any valuable End or Design. But to impart a Capacity to know our Duty, without bestowing an Ability to execute it, would have been to impart it for no wise or valuable

luable End. And can we entertain ſo mean an Idea of the wiſeſt as well as greateſt of Beings, as to imagin he would raiſe this glorious Structure of the World, only to ſerve as a Scene for intelligent Machins to be mov'd and actuated in, and that for the moſt Part ſo ridiculouſly, for no other End but to divert himſelf with the trifling Spectacle!

11. *To ſuppoſe that the great Governour of the World ſhould finally puniſh or afflict the Innocent, or acquit or reward the obſtinately guilty, is by no Means reconcileable to our Idea of the moſt perfect Government.*

This we have already obſerv'd to be clear, from the Perfection of the *Wiſdom* of the great Author and Manager of this Government. We may, it's confeſs'd, (agreeably to what was obſerv'd under the Ninth Propoſition) conceive him, for the Good of the World, to afflict an innocent Subject for a Time. Thus the innocent *Jeſus* ſuffer'd; but it was both for the univerſal Good of Mankind, and in Order to a glorious Reward. And thus the Deity is in the Scriptures repreſented as ſometimes viſiting the Offences of the Fathers on their Poſterity; but 'tis only by temporal Afflictions, and in Order to the far greater Good of Mankind in general; to whom ſuch ſevere Executions may ſerve as a Warning to avoid the like Offences.

12. Laſtly, *'Tis alike agreeable to the Character of the ſupreme Governour, both to puniſh the finally impenitent, and to pardon and reward the penitent and virtuous.*

To make this appear, 'tis conceiv'd, we need do little more than fix the true Reaſon of Rewards and Puniſhments.

That the Rewards beſtow'd by the Creator on his Creatures, are not the Reſult of any proper *Merit* in them, nor his Puniſhments the Effects of *Paſſion* in Himſelf, is evident. Our moſt perfect Acts of Pie-

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ty can't be ſaid to deſerve or to be Equivalents to the Favour of God; nor can our moſt enormous Impieties be any real Detriment to him, or capable of exciting in him paſſionate Emotions, or an Appetite of Revenge. For what Benefit or Diſadvantage can it be to a Prince to be either obey'd or diſobey'd by an Inſect? But the Diſparity between the Creator and the moſt noble of his Creatures is inconceiveably greater.

Nor is *Juſtice* or Equity (as we hinted before) to be conceiv'd as a diſtinct eſſential Property in God, which is the *immediate Reaſon* of Rewards and Puniſhments. For if we conſider, 'twill appear to be no other than a Notion of our Minds, deriv'd from our Obſervation of the Methods and Effects of the Divine Wiſdom in the Government of the rational World. For when the Wiſdom of the ſupreme Governour is conceiv'd to determin him either to puniſh or reward, with a due Regard to the State of his Subjects, we properly give him the Title of *Juſt*. But if we ſay that the Deity was eſſentially juſt (before any Object of Juſtice exiſted) we ſpeak improperly, and can mean no more than that his Wiſdom, which inclines him to exert the Acts to which we give the Denomination of Juſt, is eſſentially perfect and uniform, and muſt immutably have produc'd Effects worthy itſelf. The like may be ſaid of his *Faithfulneſs*, which is in Effect a Species of Juſtice.

And as for the eſſential *Holineſs* of the Deity, which is uſually repreſented as the original Reaſon of Rewards and Puniſhments, or as that Perfection of his Nature which determines his Juſtice to exert its Acts, it can (as was likewiſe obſerv'd) ſignify nothing elſe but the general Rectitude or Perfection of his Wiſdom, which cannot but immutably incline him to act in the moſt regular Manner. Hence it proceeds, that to aſſert that God, by a mere Act of Dominion, or without the leaſt Regard either to the State

State of particular Perſons, or the Good of the Community, can puniſh or afflict the purely innocent, or acquit and reward the obſtinately rebellious, is inconſiſtent with the Notion of his Holineſs as well as his Juſtice. For this is, in Effect, to affirm him capable of acting irregularly for none or for an unwiſe End.

We may then conclude, that *Holineſs* and *Juſtice* (as diſtinguiſhed from the Divine *Wiſdom*) are not the proper Reaſons of Rewards and Puniſhments. To diſcover which, we can perhaps uſe no better Method than to conſider the great End of the Divine Government.

Now the primary End or Deſign of the Deity in governing the World, we may be aſſur'd, can be no other than that which he immediately propos'd in its Creation, *viz.* the Exerciſe of his Wiſdom and his other Perfections, in Order to the Welfare and Happineſs of his Creatures: Which End may well be regarded as the Rule of all his conſequent Acts.

Therefore, in proving the equal Congruity or Fitneſs of Puniſhments in Caſe of Tranſgreſſion, and of Rewards and Pardon in Caſe of Obedience and Repentance, it ſeems we have nothing elſe to do, but to make it appear, that the great End of the all-wiſe Creator is equally ſerved by theſe Means.

To clear this, we may firſt reflect a little upon the Notion of Tranſgreſſion, Sin, or moral Evil, and of the Guilt or Obligation to Puniſhment which reſults from it.

We have already obſerv'd, that moral Evil can't conſiſt in being any real Detriment to the all-ſufficient Deity; and by Conſequence, that the Reaſon of Puniſhment is not his Senſe of Detriment, or an Appetite of Revenge.

On the contrary, we have perceiv'd that it chiefly conſiſts in being an extreme Detriment to the Creatures; and that in two Reſpects, *viz.* Firſt, By rendering

rendering them most unlike their Creator (as being a Deviation from those wise Rules of Benevolence and Equity by which we formerly prov'd him to govern all his Actions) and then consequently, by directly tending to frustrate the great Design of his Wisdom in the Government of the World, *viz.* their own Welfare and Happiness.

We shall now proceed to consider moral Evil in its full Latitude, or under both these Notions of it, to the End we may be qualified to make the more certain Estimate of its Guilt.

In its former Notion, *viz.* that of a mere Dissimilitude or Unlikeness to the divine Perfection (abstracting from its Consequences) the Appearance of its Evil and Guilt is, without Dispute, proportionably less, according to the diminishing Circumstances that attend it. Our Understandings are often unavoidably misinform'd and misguided. The Light of Truth, which discovers our Duty, does not always shine with equal Vigour in our Minds; but is often either obscur'd by Clouds of Melancholy, and the thick Dust of Prejudice, or refracted by the Storm and Tumult of Passion. There's often a great Degree of Ignorance and Prejudice in the Minds of the wisest and most virtuous. For as it is manifest that the wisest and best of Men are not without their Faults, so 'tis certain, that a rational Nature can't easily resolve obstinately to act in direct Opposition to the clear Evidence of Reason and Interest. Which Circumstances, as they represent the Act to be often more excusable, because less free; so they can't but cause the Evil and Guilt to appear proportionably less when so consider'd.

But then, if we consider Sin or moral Evil in its latter Notion, or with Regard to its Consequences, as having a direct Tendency to frustrate the great Design of God; as the Evil more clearly appears, so the Guilt or Obligation to Punishment can't but ap-

pear to be greater in Proportion. For as the chief End that perfect Wiſdom propos'd in the Creation and Government of the World, could not but be the greateſt Good, ſo that which naturally and directly tends to fruſtrate this End, muſt by Conſequence come under the Notion of *the greateſt of Evils.*

'Tis a plain Inference from hence, that the Exerciſe or Admiſſion of the proper natural Means either of *preventing* or *remedying* this greateſt of Evils, is become no leſs neceſſary to the wiſe and moſt beneficent Governour of the World, than was the Choice and Propoſal of the greateſt Good. Now theſe Means are *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, *Repentance* and *Amendment of Life.*

That no natural Means can be imagin'd more directly to tend to the *preventing* this greateſt of Evils, and by Conſequence, to the attaining the chief End of the moſt wiſe and beneficent Governour of the World, than the Allurements of *Rewards* and the Terrors of *Puniſhments*, is, I think, too clear to be doubted. Virtue is indeed, in ſome Reſpects, it's own Reward; and Vice, ſince it naturally tends to make us unhappy, may be ſaid to be its own Puniſhment. But of this we are uſually either very little ſenſible, or poſſeſs'd with an Opinion of the contrary. We find by Experience, that the inward Satisfaction which ſprings from Acts of Charity and Humanity, would prove but a faint Encouragement to moſt Men, without the Hope of Glory and Applauſe, or ſome other Recompence. And on the contrary, the Regret that attends an ill or barbarous Action, would be very ineffectual to reſtrain a Robber or a Murtherer, without the additional Terror of a Wheel or a Gibbet. For which Reaſon the Scriptures accommodate themſelves to our Inſenſibility, and rouſe us from our Lethargy by all the Charms of Happineſs and Terrors of Miſery. They promiſe

promise us no less than an *Eternity of Happiness* in a future State as a Reward for our endeavouring to render ourselves and others happy by our Obedience in the present State. And though we should perswade ourselves that the Account the Scriptures give of the Severity and endless Duration of the State of *Misery*, with which they threaten *Disobedience*, was proposed to us by the most wise Governour of the World, only for the better securing the most beneficent Ends of his Government, by striking a greater Terror into the less sensible Part of Mankind; yet we may not doubt but the Difference between those two States will be such as shall (at least) make the necessary Compensation for the present unequal Distribution of Things. Of the Reasonableness of such Compensation the very Heathens were generally convinc'd. Their *Metamorphoses* and *Transmigrations* were, for the most Part, no other than *Hypotheses* invented to salve the Honour of the divine Government by future Retributions. And many of their wisest Theorists observing how faint an Impression the severest Penalties, when under the Notion of future, are wont to make on the Minds of Men, concluded it necessary to represent the Penalties of the Future State to be not only the most severe, but endless and irremediable. Of this the *Epicurean* Poet *Lucretius* is an unexceptionable Witness; who pretends the Fear of eternal Punishments to have been the Original of all Religion.

This is plainly the Case with Reference to Rewards and Punishments. We shall now proceed to consider the Nature of *Repentance and Amendment of Life*. And if these can be prov'd to have as natural a Tendency to the *remedying* the Evil of Sin, as Rewards and Punishments to the *preventing* it, it will, it is conceiv'd, sufficiently appear, that they are no less conducive to the great End of the divine Government, and by Consequence that they

not only may, but muſt be conſider'd as natural Conditions of Pardon. For (as was hinted before) we may be aſſur'd, that the all-wiſe Governour of the World can't but admit and encourage the natural Means of remedying that Evil which is directly oppoſite to and inconſiſtent with the chief Good of his Subjects. To explain this, we ſhall again take a View of Sin in both its Notions, and endeavour to ſhew, how naturally Repentance and Amendment of Life tend to the remedying it in both Reſpects.

We have obſerv'd, that the firſt Notion of Sin is that of a *Diſſimilitude to the Divine Perfection.* This, in the Scripture Stile is ſometimes ſignify'd by *Filth*, *Pollution*, and *Uncleanneſs*. Therefore that which naturally tends to remedy its Evil, muſt be ſomewhat which may be ſaid to *cleanſe* and *purify* us from the Filth which defaced the divine Image in us, and thereby to reſtore us to the Likeneſs and Reſemblance of the Deity. This Repentance and Amendment moſt certainly do. Our Reſemblance to God in the Government of our Actions (which alone is here to be conſider'd) muſt conſiſt in our Imitation of that Perfection of his Nature by which all his Actions are ever govern'd and regulated; I mean his *Wiſdom*, or (which we have obſerv'd to be in Effect the ſame) his *Holineſs*. And 'tis this Imitation of the divine governing Perfection (or rather the Habit from which it proceeds) which is chiefly what the Scriptures call the *Divine Image*. Accordingly, the whole of Religious Practice is in the Scriptures repreſented under the Notion of *Wiſdom*; as is the contrary Courſe under that of *Folly*. But if Religious Wiſdom be the ſame with Holineſs, and Sin and Folly be nothing different; and if to deface the divine Image in our Souls, and pollute our Natures, be in the Scripture Stile the ſame as to deviate from the moſt perfect Rule of Wiſdom, by which all our Actions ought to be form'd; it follows, that

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as when (by the divine Aſſiſtance) we repent and turn from Sin to Virtue, we do the wiſeſt Act that our Nature in thoſe Circumſtances is capable of; ſo by a ſincere Continuance in a virtuous Courſe for the future, we recover our former State with Reſpect to Purity, or re-aſſume ſo much of our Maker's Image as by our Sin and Folly we had loſt.

The other Notion of Sin we obſerv'd to be a *Contrariety to the Divine Perfection*, or a Tendency to fruſtrate the great End of the Divine Wiſdom in the Government of the World. In this Reſpect the Scriptures ſometimes ſtile it *Enmity* and *Hatred*. By which Words, in a Tropical Senſe, it's Evil is very well expreſs'd. For though we aſſert that no Man can be ſaid, in a proper Senſe, to hate or to bear an Enmity to God as God, or as having a true Notion of him, yet Sin (at leaſt) conſiſts in the Commiſſion of ſuch Actions as have a direct Oppoſition to his great End or Deſign; ſuch as thoſe of an Enemy are wont to have. And as Sin produces Guilt, or an Obligation to Puniſhment, ſo 'tis ſometimes in the Scriptures repreſented under the Similitude of a *Debt*. Now if we conſider Sin in theſe Notions of it, it will appear, that Repentance and Amendment of Life no leſs naturally tend to remedy its Evil, and by Conſequence that they are naturally qualified to be Conditions of Pardon. For theſe have evidently a direct Tendency to the Accompliſhment of the great End of God; and by inclining Men to Acts agreeable to the Divine Natute and Will, and thus far changing their States with Reference to the great Lawgiver, they may be ſaid to reconcile them to him, and if not to diſcharge their Debt, or diſſolve their Obligation to Puniſhment, yet to qualify them for an Intereſt in that Satisfaction which effectually does it.

But here it may be objected, that Faith in the Saviour of the World is in the Scriptures joyned with Repentance and Amendment of Life, as a Condition of equal Neceſſity in Order to Pardon.

But to this may be reply'd, That though Faith in a Saviour both was and is neceſſary to ſuch as either heard or do hear the Sound of the Goſpel-Revelation, yet the Caſe of ſuch as liv'd before his Incarnation (a very few excepted) was, it ſeems, very different: Since Faith in a future Redeemer was, for ought appears, never expreſly requir'd of them as a Condition of Pardon: Whereas on the contrary, Repentance and Amendment were ever ſo requir'd both by the natural and revealed Law. We have here been treating only of the natural Congruity or Fitneſs of Repentance and Amendment to qualify for Pardon. But though this ſhould be admitted, 'twill by no Means follow that no other Condition could in any Caſe become neceſſary. For none can juſtly doubt but the ſupreme Governour was free to ſuſpend the Benefits of our Saviour's Satisfaction on other Conditions beſides the natural ones; eſpecially on ſo reaſonable a Condition as that of Faith in the great Author of it, when clearly reveal'd. But this does not in the leaſt hinder but that the Performance of the natural Conditions may ſtill be ſufficient to qualify thoſe who never heard of that Satisfaction for a Share in its Benefits.

Thus much may have been ſufficient with Reference to the Government of particular Perſons as ſuch. The Wiſdom of God in the Government of *Communities*, may, 'tis conceiv'd, be abundantly clear'd by the following Propoſitions.

1. *God is the Author of Political Society; as having qualify'd ſome Creatures for it, and implanted an Inclination to it.*

'Twas the Notion of Mr. *Hobbes* (deriv'd from the *Epicureans*) that the natural State was *a State of War*;

War; or that there was no Difference nor Notion of Right or Wrong, Juſt or Unjuſt, antecedently to Compact or Agreement; and that by Conſequence Men, as well as Brutes, had not only a Privilege, but a natural Inclination to oppreſs and deſtroy each other, in order to engroſs to themſelves whatever was in the Compaſs of their Power.

But the eternal immutable Relations of Fit and Unfit (which we have obſerv'd to be in the Nature of Things) according to which not only Reaſon but Inſtinct is obſerv'd to act; the innate Principle of Self-love, which inclines not only Men but the very Brutes to conſult their own Security, and not to aſſault others unleſs for Self-preſervation; the natural Affection between the Sexes ſo ſtrongly diſpoſing them to Union; the natural Inclination of all Animals of the ſame Species to each other; and laſtly, the natural Methods of communicating their Inclinations or Affections, but eſpecially the Faculty of Speech for which Men were ſo pecularly fram'd, and by which they are render'd more ſociable than other Animals, are ſufficient Confutations of that Fancy.

2. *The immediate End of political Society is the preſent Good.*

As the End of the ſupreme Governour in his Government of particular Perſons as ſuch, is moſt rationally concluded to be chiefly their future Good, and their preſent no otherwiſe than as conducive to, or, (at leaſt) conſiſtent with that; ſo in the Aſſociation and Government of Communities, 'tis principally their preſent Good. This is clear from the mention'd Principles of Society implanted in our Natures; which have all an immediate Tendency either to the procuring preſent Advantage, or to the warding off impending Evils.

Hence it partly proceeds, that though in the Government of particular Perſons, Rewards and Puniſh-

ments are usually reserv'd to the Future State; on the contrary, such Societies as most industriously promote or oppose the true Ends of Government, are commonly recompenced in this. As we shall have Occasion more particularly to remark hereafter.

3. *From the Complication and Interfering of these two Governments, (viz. of Particulars and Communities) distinguish'd by two so different Ends as are the Future and the Present Good, it necessarily proceeds, that there must frequently be some Variety and seeming Irregularity in the Conduct and Methods of the supreme Governour.*

For since the chief Design of God may justly be concluded to be the future Good of particular Persons as such, no Wonder if he sometimes postpones the (present) Good of Communities when in Competition, as being in itself of far less Consequence.

4. *The present or future Good of a few particular Persons or Societies, being of less Consideration than the present or future Good of the whole Community or entire human Species, must ever be conceived to give Place when in Competition.*

Hence it follows, that the Divine Conduct in governing the World ought not to be measured by such narrow Models as some are apt to frame; who (as my Lord *Bacon* observes) are wont to thrust themselves into the Centre of the World, and to imagine that all Lines should meet in them and their Fortunes. Every wise Governour proposes certain general Ends which are chiefly to be promoted for the publick Good, and to which all private Interests must submit. Thus (to give an Instance in the Divine Government of the World:) Since the erecting of mighty Monarchies could not but be a general Benefit in the earlier Ages of the World, as tending in the most effectual Manner to civilize the rude and barbarous People by the Propagation and Improvement of Religion and Arts; the supreme Governour,

nour, partly for this Reaſon, and partly for a Puniſhment of the Vicious, hath frequently either ordain'd, or permitted the Conqueſts of Nations: In which, for the moſt Part, he has made Uſe of the moſt civiliz'd, or, at leaſt, the moſt virtuous People as his Inſtruments. Thus 'tis obſervable, that the *Babylonians*, *Egyptians*, *Perſians*, *Greeks*, *Romans*, *Getes*, *Chineſes*, *Jews* and *Mexicans*, who moſt extended their Conqueſts in their ſeveral Quarters, were in thoſe Times either the moſt polite, or the moſt virtuous Nations upon Record in Hiſtory. And though Enterprizes of this Nature were not uſually atchiev'd without the great Damage and Deſtruction of particular Perſons, yet ſuch Inconveniencies were, for the moſt Part, both leſs conſiderable than the Benefit that thereby accru'd to the Community, and fell moſt heavily on ſuch as apparently deſerv'd them moſt. And though the Good and the Bad have been ever ſo mix'd together, as that the former could not ſometimes without a Miracle eſcape a Share in the Miſeries of the latter; yet the beſt of Men being ever more or leſs faulty, there could be no juſt Plea againſt the Adminiſtration of the Divine Government in this Reſpect; eſpecially if it be conſider'd, that temporal Deſtruction was to them but a Surprize into Happineſs, at the ſame Time that it o the others was a Prelude to future Miſery.

A certain Nation, I confeſs, whoſe barbarous Treatment of the naked defenceleſs *Americans* is ſo generally deteſted, may ſeem to yield no inconſiderable Objection againſt the Obſervation we juſt now made. And this the rather deſerves our Notice, becauſe the Invention of Fire-arms (which facilitated the Conqueſt of that vaſt Continent) immediately before its Diſcovery, and the Concurrence of ſo many extraordinary Circumſtances in the Diſcovery and Conqueſt themſelves, ſeem to argue the Deity to have had a particular Concern in that Affair.

Yet

Yet admitting all this, 'tis conceiv'd, the Equity of the Divine Conduct is ſufficiently clear. For as on the one Side, 'tis but too evident that thoſe *Americans* (like the *Canaanites* of old) were become impious Wretches, polluted with the Blood of human Sacrifices, and guilty of the groſſeſt Idolatry and other enormous Vices; ſo on the other Side it muſt be confeſs'd, that though their Invaders exceeded their Commiſſion, by ſuffering their Pride and Avarice to prevail almoſt to the Extinction of Humanity (for which their Leaders appear to have received exemplary Puniſhment) yet their Poſterity have diſcover'd a very commendable Zeal for the Converſion and Civilizing of thoſe Barbarians. And I think it muſt be confeſs'd, that the *Roman* Religion (though ſufficiently corrupted) was far preferable to that moſt abominable Superſtition which had blinded thoſe unhappy People. And if we reflect upon the Advantages of that Religion in its ſo near Reſemblance of the Pagan Worſhip of Demons and Inferior Deities, by which it the more eaſily inſinuates itſelf among ſuch as have been bred in a Superſtition ſo little different, it may be conſider'd as no unfit Introduction to a purer Religion in future Ages.

To this Place may be reduc'd that Method of the Divine Government which ſome would repreſent as unaccountable; I mean the Puniſhment of Princes in certain Caſes, by the temporal Loſs and Deſtruction of their Subjects. For as we may be aſſur'd that this is never without ſufficient Demerit in the Subjects themſelves, ſo (ſince the Grandeur of Princes, which is ſupported by the Numbers and Riches of their Subjects, is their moſt tender and ſenſible Part) it can't be doubted but it tends moſt effectually to their Reclamation on whoſe Conduct the Welfare of the whole human Community ſo immediately depends. The like may be obſerv'd with Reference to

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the Puniſhment of Parents by the temporal Damage of their Poſterity.

5. *'Twas highly ſuitable to the Divine Wiſdom in the Government of the World, both to pre-ordain ſome of the principal Events with Reference either to the entire human Community, or to the more conſiderable Parts of it, and to reſerve to itſelf the Right of interpoſing and influencing particular Agents, more eſpecially in order to the Accompliſhment of thoſe Events.*

That this has been the Method of the Divine Wiſdom, is abundantly clear from the Scripture Prophecies and Hiſtories. And that the Divine Wiſdom in this Regard diſplays itſelf in the moſt illuſtrious Manner, is certain. For hereby it appears, that the Government of the World is equally oppos'd to *Chance* and *Deſtiny*. Had the Deity taken no Care of Futurity, but left every Man to the Conduct of his own Inclinations, and natural Effects in the general to the immediate Influence of their Cauſes, without ever interpoſing to direct 'em to the Attainment of his great Deſigns; this would have been almoſt, in Effect, to diveſt himſelf of the Government of rational Agents, and to ſubject their Affairs to Chance, and to the Hazard of the utmoſt Diſorder and Confuſion. Or had he, on the contrary, abſolutely or fatally determin'd every Event (though this, I confeſs, would have been far enough from diveſting himſelf of the Government of the World, yet) it would have been a Government unworthy the Deity, a Government entirely excluſive of all proper Sin and Puniſhment, Virtue and Rewards; wherein himſelf would, in Effect, have been the only Agent, and all the Creatures ſtupid and paſſive. Whereas on the contrary, by pre-ordaining the moſt material Events, and ſuffering the Creatures freely to exert their Faculties in all convenient Caſes, he appears moſt wiſely to have

have choſen the middle Way, and thereby to have equally avoided the Miſchiefs of both Extremes.

Again, If the Deity had left Men in every Caſe to the Exerciſe of their Liberty, he could have given no Proof of his Government of human Actions; and had he quite excluded Liberty by fatally determining every Event, the Creatures could have given no Proof of their Subjection and Obedience. Whereas by determining ſome Events, and reſerving to himſelf a Liberty of interpoſing in all others, as he gives his intelligent Creatures ſufficient Capacity and Opportunity, in all convenient Caſes, to evidence their Allegiance to him, ſo he procures to himſelf the Opportunity of making ſenſible Diſcoveries of his Sovereignty, and actual Dominion over them and their Affairs; and at the ſame Time of ſtriking a deep Senſe of that Reverence and Duty which they owe him. This we find he has ſometimes done by foretelling future Events, and ſometimes by his palpable Interpoſition in the Affairs of the World by Miracles or ſupernatural Effects: By both which Methods, how much the Intereſts of Religion, and by Conſequence his great Deſign in the Creation and Government of the World, have been advanc'd, may in ſome Meaſure be conceiv'd by ſuch as conſider how much greater Impreſſion miraculous or extraordinary Effects are apt to make on the Minds of Men, than the common and daily Reſults of natural Cauſes; and how ſtrongly moſt Men are bent to ſearch into Futurity, even ſometimes to the Neglect of their preſent Intereſts. For which Reaſon, we find the Wiſdom of the great Creator, in this Reſpect, has often been imitated (whether by Demons or deſigning Prieſts we need not here determine) in the Pagan Oracles, as likewiſe in their Auguries and Divinations; by which bold and inquiſitive Men have endeavour'd to penetrate into thoſe Secrets which none but the Deity could diſcloſe.

8. *If*

8. *If, notwithſtanding theſe moſt prudent Methods of the ſupreme Governour his great End and Deſign (the univerſal Good of his Creatures) does not appear to be advanc'd ſo conſtantly and uniformly as might be expected where the moſt perfect Wiſdom has the Management and Direction; it deſerves to be remember'd, that it is the Government of Free Agents, who are, in moſt Caſes, to be the Determiners of their Actions.*

There's no compelling Men to be virtuous, nor conſequently to be happy. For where there's Force of any Kind, the very Notion of Virtue ceaſes. The Wiſdom therefore of the Divine Conduct in the Government of the World, could not, in Matters purely moral, conſiſt in a conſtant neceſſitating Influence on the Minds of Men, and an entire Baniſhment of Evil out of the World; but muſt have diſcover'd itſelf either in making a prudent Proviſion againſt ſuch croſs Events as might proceed from their Perverſeneſs and Folly, or elſe in rendering particular Evils (as far as is conſiſtent with the Government of Free Agents) conducive to the common Good. Both which Deſigns he evidently purſues by the Methods before obſerv'd.

CHAP. XII.

III. OUR laſt Idea of the Divine Perfection or Sufficiency, as it refers to other Beings as actually exiſtent, is that of *Providence.*

Our Idea of Providence we derive from the Conſideration of thoſe Acts of the Divine Wiſdom and Benevolence, proceeding from an exact Knowledge of the ſeveral States or Conditions of the Creatures, whereby the Deity has always more immediately provided for their Preſervation or Subſiſtence.

That God perfectly knows whatever is in the World, is plain, becauſe he created and ſtill ſuſtains what-

whatever is in the World. For 'tis equally abſurd to ſay, either that he knew not what he created, or that he knows not what he now ſuſtains or continues in Being.

As the Acts of Creation and Suſtentation refer ſimply to the Exiſtence of the Creatures, and thoſe of Government to their State and Actions, ſo thoſe of Providence, as here underſtood, refer to their *Subſiſtence* and *Preſervation*.

It has, I confeſs, been uſual to conceive Providence in a larger Senſe, as including all the Acts of God towards his Creatures conſequent on their Creation. But as this is a very general Notion, and contains a Complication of many and very different Ideas, which are thereby apt to be confus'd and indiſtinct, ſo both the original Signification of the Word, and its common Uſe, both among Ancients and Moderns, will favour a more reſtrain'd and limited Senſe.

Some Philoſophers, under Colour of raiſing our Conceptions of the Divine Greatneſs and Majeſty, have abſolutely excluded a Providence in the larger Senſe of the Word. Others, conceiving the King of the World under the degrading Character of an Earthly Prince, have imagin'd that he ever commits the Care of his Subjects to his Miniſters or Deputies. Others have limited it to the nobler Parts of the Creation, and abandoned the inferior to Chance, or the unmanag'd Influence of ſecond Cauſes.

But as our *Reaſon* will not ſuffer us to doubt but that the Knowledge of God is perfect, and extends to the meaneſt of his Creatures, and his Power Almighty and incapable of Fatigue; ſo 'twill aſſure us, that Nothing is by his Wiſdom judg'd unworthy his Care and Protection, which by the ſame Wiſdom was judg'd not unworthy his Creation.

Nor

Nor will our *Experience* ſuffer us to doubt of the Reality and Univerſality of a Providence. We ſhall inſtance in a few Particulars; and in ſo doing we ſhall omit all ſuch Effects of it as may with any Plauſibility be ſuſpected to be the neceſſary Reſults either of the original Structure of the World, or of that of particular Beings; to the End there may be no juſt Pretence to elude the Evidence they may yield us of the preſent and more immediate Efficiency of ſuch an omnipotent and moſt beneficent Being as we before diſcover'd.

'Twere endleſs to enumerate ſuch probable Inſtances of a Providence with Reference to particular Perſons and Things, as both our own Experience and the Hiſtories of all Ages abound with; and we ſhall wholly omit them; both becauſe Men are apt to be very incredulous in Matters of this Nature, and becauſe there's no perfect or conſtant Uniformity to be pretended (for Reaſons eaſily to be collected from what was obſerv'd when we diſcours'd of the Methods of the Divine Government) but whatever Inſtances can be produc'd as Proofs of ſuch a particular Providence, may perhaps be confronted by others which ſeem to import the contrary.

We ſhall therefore ſingle out ſuch Inſtances only, in which we are either univerſally concern'd, or with Reference to which there can be no colourable Plea for Incredulity. Such we humbly conceive to be,

1. *The Continuation of the Gravitation of the Parts which compoſe the ſeveral greater Bodies of the Univerſe towards their reſpective Centres, and of that of the Bodies themſelves towards each other.*

For this we formerly prov'd to be no Effect of any intrinſick Property of Matter, but to be either a mediate or immediate Impreſſion of the Divine Power. But *Gravity* is the only Cement which holds the Parts of the World together: Without which, that very Motion we obſerve in ſome of thoſe vaſt

vaſt Bodies (at preſent ſo neceſſary to the Subſiſtence of Animals and Vegetables) would ſoon ſhatter and reduce them to a *Chaos* of Confuſion and Deformity.

2. *The Continuation of the nice Adjuſtment of that Projectile Motion of the Planets of our Syſtem to the Force of their Gravitation towards each other and the Sun.*

How great an Inſtance this yields us of a Providence, will eaſily appear to ſuch as ſhall conſider, that without it all things (as in the former Caſe) would by Degrees come to Confuſion. The *Moon* and the *Earth*, *Jupiter* and its *Satellites*, would either meet, or elſe fly off from each other to the utmoſt Spaces of the Heavens. In ſhort, the whole Planetary *Chorus* would ſoon either ſink into the Sun, and lie broiling in that vaſt Ocean of Fire, or elſe deſert him, and like *Comets*, pay an unwelcome Viſit to the remoter Parts of the World; to the Damage, and perhaps Deſtruction of the neighbouring Syſtems.

3. *The Continuation of the Oblique Poſition of the Earth's Axis, by preventing ſuch Alteration therein as might have happen'd either by the too near Approach of Comets, or the Influence of any other Cauſe.*

Without this, the uſeful and neceſſary Variety of *Seaſons* would ceaſe. The Sun's Heat would no where increaſe by thoſe juſt Degrees neceſſary for the ripening of Fruits. The greateſt Part of the Earth would be expos'd to the Rigours of a perpetual Winter, while the others would be parch'd and burnt up by an Exceſs of Heat.

4. *The Regulation of the Winds* is another Proof of a Provident Deity. The frequent Variations of the Winds in moſt Parts of the Earth, demonſtrate that they proceed from no uniform mechanical Cauſes. Yet theſe are the grand Inſtruments of Nature, on which the Preſervation or Deſtruction of Animals

and

and Vegetables more immediately depends. Which makes it necessary to conclude, that a perfectly wise and beneficent Deity (if any such) would not leave them entirely to Chance, or the ungoverned Influence of their immediate Causes, and thereby abandon his Creation to so manifest a Hazard. And we may be assur'd from Experience that he does not. For did not some superior Principle sometimes excite and regulate their Motions, 'tis reasonable to believe the Earth would soon be reduc'd to an inanimate Heap and hideous Solitude. The *Air* would soon become a vast Receptacle of Infection and Blasting. The *Sea* would be no other than a Sink of Poison and Noisomeness. The *Land* would either become barren for want of Moisture, or be laid waste by repeated Inundations.

Whereas, on the contrary, we find the Seasons of the Year are sufficiently distinguish'd. The pestilential Steams of the Earth are dissipated. The Seas are preserv'd wholsome by Storms and Tempests. And the Air is refresh'd with seasonable Breezes.

This makes even the Variation of the Winds, a considerable Proof of the Superintendence of an intelligent Cause. For were they every where uniform and periodical (like the Trade-Winds that blow between the Tropicks) such Regularity, and whatsoever good Effects it might produce, would, with some Colour of Reason, be suspected to proceed from the necessary Constitution of the World, and consequently would yield no sufficient or convincing Proof of the Agency of an intellectual Cause.

It must be own'd, that the Acts of the Divine Government do sometimes interfere, and cause a Variety in the usual Course of Providence. The Winds have not always been so regulated as to prevent Inundations, Pestilence, or Sterility. But then the Divine Government, as it makes, so it solves the Difficulty. The credible Tradition of former Ages

(not to mention the ſuppos'd Effects and Relicts that are ſtill viſible) will not ſuffer us to doubt of the Reality of the univerſal Deluge. For this we have the concurrent Teſtimonies of the *Chaldeans*, *Egyptians*, *Phœnicians*, *Greeks*, and even of the *Americans*, as well as of the *Jews*. But this both *Jews* and *Pagans* agree to have been the juſt Demerit of a degenerate World. And even then, 'twas no inconſiderable Inſtance of a Providence, that in the Midſt of the general Deſolation there ſhould any eſcape to refurniſh the Earth with Inhabitants. And that the Lot ſhould be caſt on the Virtuous, while the Waters were every where triumphant over the Impious. Thus, (if we will not believe *Moſes*) *Ovid*, from the Tradition of former Ages, aſſures us of *Deucalion*, (which appears to be but another Name for *Noah*) and his Wife *Pyrrha*, that,

Non illo melior quiſquam nec amantior æqui
Vir fuit, aut illâ reverentior ulla Deorum.

Ne'er liv'd a better, juſter Man than He;
Nor liv'd a Woman more devout than She.

And as for the reſt of that Age, we have the Teſtimony of Hiſtorians, as well Profane as Sacred, to aſſure us, that they were extremely degenerate and vicious.

It muſt likewiſe be own'd, that we ſometimes hear of Famine and Peſtilence. But then theſe ſeldom happen, are of ſmall Extent, and are uſually appropriated to the Circumſtances either of the Country or its Inhabitants. So that they are ſo far from yielding an Argument againſt the Reality of a Providence, that they ſometimes furniſh a Proof of the Equity of the divine Government.

Theſe are the more general Proofs of the Exiſtence of a Provident Deity. Some of the leſs general are, 'tis humbly conceiv'd,

1. *The due Proportion between the Numbers of the different Sexes of Animals.*

This is very remarkable in Man, in whom it was moſt neceſſary. The Proportion has been obſerv'd to be commonly either as Fourteen to Thirteen, or as Sixteen to Fifteen. The ſmall Surpluſage is ſo far from weakening this Proof of a Providence, that it rather ſtrengthens and confirms it; for by this, Proviſion is made againſt the Accidents to which the Males are chiefly expos'd. By theſe Methods in all Ages ſo great an Equality has been preſerved between the Sexes, as would have been abſolutely unaccountable without the Suppoſition of a Providence. For had not a Providence concern'd itſelf in this Affair, (whether we conceive the Rudiments of the human Body to be originally contained in the Egg, as are thoſe of Plants in their Seeds; or whether we ſuppoſe it to proceed from ſome Animalcule of the Male Sperm, as is moſt likely, yet) ſince the Ovary of the Female muſt be conceiv'd to contain Numbers of Eggs of either Sort; and ſince the Animalcules of the Male Sperm are obſerv'd to be ſo numerous, 'twas very poſſible, in either Caſe, that the Diſproportion between the Males and Females might, at ſome Time or other, have been ſo great, as very much to diminiſh, if not entirely to extinguiſh the Species.

2. *The Prevention of the Confuſion of Species by unnatural Mixtures*, is another Proof of a Provident Deity. Without this the Face of Nature might, by Degrees, have been almoſt entirely changed; and many of thoſe Signatures of Divine Wiſdom, which at preſent diſcover themſelves in the regular Frame and Conſtitution of Animals, effac'd. The World might have been filled with *Minotaurs*, *Harpies*, and *Chimera*'s: And theſe might have been infinitely blended together into all the Shapes of hideous Deformity. The Man and the Brute might

have been no longer diſtinguiſhable ; and Reaſon might have been impair'd, if not entirely loſt, in the unequal Mixture. For we find no ſuch ſtrong and uniform Inclination in Animals of the ſame Species to each other, or Averſion to thoſe of a different one, as wholly to prevent promiſcuous Copulation. We are aſſur'd, that in *Africa* eſpecially, where the exceſſive Heats oblige Beaſts of different Kinds to meet at Watering-places, they by Degrees become familiar, and often produce Monſters ; for which *Africa* was ever remarkable. But theſe, like Meteors, ſoon diſappear: The divine Providence ſo ordering, that they want the Means of propagating their anamolous Kinds ; which are ever extinct in the Individual. Of this Mules are a known Inſtance.

3. *The Invariateneſs of Seeds*, is another no leſs conſiderable Inſtance of a Providence. This is uſually ſeen in Animals when the ordinary Courſe of Nature is obſerv'd. But 'tis moſt remarkable in Plants, where more neceſſary. Otherwiſe, what was wholſome Food or Phyſick in one Age, might have become Poiſon in another : Whereas on the contrary, ſuch Deſcriptions of the Virtues and Properties of Plants as have been left us by the Ancients, are found exactly agreeable to the Experience of the preſent Age. And yet, the ſlight Texture of the innumerable Parts of Seeds, the Difference of Soils, and the Variety of Accidents to which they are expos'd, may well render ſuch an Agreement unaccountable without the Suppoſition of a Providence.

4. To add no more. *The due Proportion of the Numbers of Animals and Vegetables, by the equal Prevention of their too great Increaſe and Deſtruction*, is an Argument of a Providence. Thus, notwithſtanding the great Conſumption by Wars and other Accidents, the Number of Mankind in every Age not only equals, but exceeds that of the former. And, which

which is more remarkable, the Increaſe is in ſuch a Gradation as bears a Proportion to the gradual Invention of Arts and Sciences, and the Improvement of the Methods of Living.

And as for other Animals, their Propagation is obſerv'd to be ever proportionable both to the Length of their Lives, and to the Accidents to which they are more peculiarly ſubject. Thus, the Doe, which lives long, breeds, after eight Months Pregnancy, but one, or, at the moſt, but two; whereas the Fox, which lives but ordinarily Six or Eight Years, breeds four in a much ſhorter Time. The like may be obſerv'd of the ſeveral Sorts of Vegetables. And in the general, it may be remarked, that Beaſts multiply more than Men; Fowls than Beaſts; Fiſhes than Fowls; Inſects and Vegetables than Fiſhes: Which they ſeverally do in a fit Proportion to their Decay and Conſumption. By which uniform Courſe of Providence both the Species are preſerv'd, and yet the World is not overſtock'd with Inhabitants.

A N

Impartial Enquiry

Into the EXISTENCE and

NATURE OF GOD:

Being a MODEST ESSAY towards a more INTELLIGIBLE ACCOUNT of the DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

With REMARKS on ſeveral AUTHORS both ANCIENT and MODERN.

BOOK the SECOND.

By SAMUEL COLLIBER.

Dedit omnibus Deus pro virili portione Sapientiam, ut et inaudita inveſtigare poſſent et audita perpendere.

Lactantius Lib. 2. Divinarum Inſt. Cap. 8.

LONDON: Printed for R. ROBINSON, at the *Golden Lyon* in St. *Paul's Church-Yard.* MDCCXXXV.

AN

Impartial Enquiry

INTO THE

Exiſtence and Nature of *GOD*.

BOOK the SECOND.

PART the FIRST.

Of the Exiſtence of GOD.

IN the former Book we made it our Endeavour to diſcover ſuch Principles of Reaſon as might yield Conviction to ourſelves, without being very ſolicitous about the Sentiments of others. In this Diſcourſe we ſhall proceed to make ſome Enquiry into the commonly receiv'd Opinions, to the End that having clearly comprehended the Agreement or Diſagreement, we may be the better qualified to determine upon the Parallel.

Which

Which we perhaps ſhall ſucceſsfully do, if we agree equally to ſuſpect ſuch Opinions as ſhall tempt us either to think meanly of the Deity, or elſe to affect an abſtruſe and unintelligible Sublimity. The latter of which appears to be the more dangerous Extreme. For few Men find themſelves inclin'd to receive little degrading Ideas of the beſt and nobleſt of Beings; whereas on the contrary, the Proſpect of ſo glorious an Object ſo vehemently ſtrikes the Spirits, that it is apt to unfix the moſt ſedate Minds, and to diſſolve our Reaſon into Rapture and Enthuſiaſm.

We ſhall reduce our Enquiry to Three General Diviſions. In the Firſt we ſhall treat of the *Exiſtence of God.* In the Second, of the *Infinity* or *Immenſity of his Eſſence.* And in the Third, we ſhall treat of what is uſually call'd the *Infinity of his Duration.* Under theſe Three Diviſions may be comprehended whatever ſhall appear neceſſary to be added on this important Subject.

To begin with the *Exiſtence of God.* This, we humbly conceive, has been ſo firmly demonſtrated in the former Book, as to admit of no reaſonable Doubt. Wherefore the Cauſe being already ſufficiently ſecur'd, 'twill be no Diſadvantage, but a conſiderable Service to it, to detect the Fallacy and Weakneſs of ſome other pretended Proofs that have been employ'd to ſupport it.

Epicurus having rejected all other Arguments for the Exiſtence of a God, and, in Effect, retain'd only the Name of *God* in his Philoſophy, was yet willing to admit one Proof, *viz.* the Proof deriv'd from the Univerſality of his Idea. For he pretended, that even antecedently to Inſtruction and the Exerciſe of Reaſon, by a Sort of Anticipation of the Uſe of his Faculties, every Man had in his Mind an Idea of ſomething Divine.

I confeſs, I have always thought we had Reaſon to ſuſpect the Gifts of Enemies; who if they can once perſuade us to caſt away our Weapons, and to defend ourſelves with ſuch others as they pleaſe to beſtow upon us, will not eaſily fail of Victory. For whatever Buſtle has of late been made with this Argument of *Epicurus*, it ſeems to me to be capable of yielding very little Aſſiſtance to the Cauſe of a Deity.

Had *Epicurus* look'd upon the Idea of God as a Reſult of Reaſoning and Enquiry, 'tis to be own'd he might have drawn a probable Argument from its Univerſality to prove his Exiſtence; that being, without Diſpute, moſt highly reaſonable to be believ'd, which in all Ages and Nations has been believ'd by the moſt wary and diſintereſted Reaſoners as well as others. But this was none of his Meaning. For 'tis agreed that he ſuppos'd this Idea as Innate or Con-natural, not as the pure Reſult of Reaſon.

Or had he been capable of proving but the *Reality* of ſuch an innate Idea, it might have been admitted as a good Argument by ſuch as aſſert either a Creation or Formation of the World by a provident or beneficent Cauſe. For ſuppoſing ſuch an univerſal Idea to be real, it would on their Principles be altogether unaccountable from whence it ſhould have proceeded, unleſs from the Author of Nature. But ſtill it could have been no Proof upon the Principles of *Epicurus*, who conceiv'd it no otherwiſe than as the Effect of ſtupid unintelligent Matter and fortuitous Motion, and whoſe Idea of a God included no ſuch Attributes as Providence and Beneficence.

From whence 'tis clear, that ſince this Argument could have no rational Effect upon *Epicurus*, it follows, that when he ſaid he admitted a God or Gods becauſe of the Univerſality of the Idea of ſomething,

Divine,

Divine, he could in Effect mean no other, than that he ſuppos'd the Exiſtence of ſome Divine Being or Beings, only becauſe the Suppoſition was faſhionable and popular, and becauſe the contrary might have expos'd him to Cenſure and Puniſhment.

But that there is really ſuch an Idea in the Mind of any Man antecedently to Inſtruction and Reaſoning, does neither appear by our Experience of ourſelves, nor is capable of Proof from our Obſervation of others; which yet are the only poſſible Ways of proving it. For Tradition and Inſtruction uſually make ſuch early Impreſſions, as to prevent the leaſt Reflection upon any ſuch innate Idea. And as it admits of no Proof from Experience, ſo 'tis ſufficiently confuted by it. For we find that ſuch as receive either none, or but ſome imperfect Notices of a Deity from Tradition or Reaſoning, have either no Idea of him at all, or but ſuch a corrupt and imperfect one as ſufficiently correſponds to their Means of Information. And this, I take it, is abundantly clear from the credible Accounts of Travellers.

Des Cartes, after the Example, though I will not ſay with the Deſign of *Epicurus*, having equally diſcarded all the uſual Proofs of the Divine Exiſtence, thinks he has ſufficiently ſupply'd their Room by two Demonſtrations deriv'd from the Nature of the ſame ſuppos'd *innate Idea*. And this Topick has ſince become fruitful of Arguments.

One Demonſtration of *Des Cartes* is to this Effect. An Attribute which we clearly and diſtinctly perceive to be included in the Idea of a Thing may be truly affirm'd of that Thing. But the Idea which we find implanted in our Minds of a Deity or moſt perfect Being, plainly includes *Neceſſity of Exiſtence*: For this being without Doubt a Perfection, can't but be contain'd in the Idea of that Being which is conceiv'd to poſſeſs all Perfections. Conſequently, we may truly affirm, that God, or a moſt Perfect Being,

Being, neceſſarily exiſts : It being a Propoſition which is ſelf evident.

It were to be wiſh'd that this pretended Demonſtration was as ſolid as 'tis ſpecious and ſurprizing ; but I fear it never yet had the proper Effect of Demonſtration on any conſidering Man, by entirely removing all Doubts and Scruples on this great Point. We ſhall give it a few Thoughts.

And in the firſt Place we may obſerve, that there are many Propoſitions which are ſelf-evident and indiſputable, *viz.* All ſuch whoſe Terms are neceſſarily connected or jointly ſignify the very ſame Idea either in whole or in Part. So this Propoſition, *A Man is a rational Being*, is ſelf-evident. For there's none who underſtands the Terms but muſt immediately aſſent to its Truth ; ſince theſe Terms, *A Man* and *a Rational Being* (in the ſtricteſt Senſe) ſignify the very ſame Idea.

Again, The Truth of ſuch Propoſitions may be obſerv'd not to depend on the Exiſtence of the Subjects or Things of which they are affirm'd. For if the Idea jointly ſignify'd by the Terms or Words was fix'd, then the Words were neceſſarily connected, and by Conſequence the Propoſition they compoſe was neceſſarily true, though the Thing ſignify'd by the Idea had no Exiſtence ; which Sort of Truth we may properly enough diſtinguiſh by the Name of *ideal* or *notional Truth*, becauſe not founded on the Exiſtence of the Thing ſignify'd by the Idea, but merely on the Exiſtence of the *Idea* in the Mind of ſome intellectual Being, and on the fix'd Conformity of the Terms or Words to that Idea.

In the next Place it may be obſerv'd, that as there's a *notional or ideal Truth of Propoſitions*, conſiſting in the fix'd Conformity of the Terms to the Idea exiſting in the Mind, ſo there's a *real Truth of Ideas*, conſiſting in the Conformity of the Idea to the Thing ſignify'd or repreſented by it. This Truth is of

of a quite different Kind from the Notional Truth; and the notional Truth may (as we before obſerv'd) be very well without it. For Example, This Propoſition, *A Man is a Rational Being*, might be notionally true, *i. e.* the Terms might be fix'd and determin'd to ſignify the Notion or Idea *of a Man* in the Mind of ſome other intellectual Being, and by Conſequence, the Conformity between theſe Terms and ſuch an Idea *of a Man*, might cauſe this Propoſition to be true, though no ſuch Creature *as a Man* repreſented by that Idea were exiſtent in Nature. Theſe Things, I take it, are ſo clear as not to need any further Illuſtration.

To apply this to the preſent Caſe.

We grant that the Propoſition, *God neceſſarily exiſts*, or, which is all one, *God is neceſſarily exiſtent*, is a ſelf-evident Propoſition, like the former. For there's none who has an Idea of a *God or moſt perfect Being*, and of *neceſſary Exiſtence*, but muſt immediately perceive the Conformity and Connection of theſe Terms; ſince the Term *neceſſary Exiſtence*, ſignifying a Perfection, can't but be connected with the Term *God*, which ſignifies a Complication of all Perfections.

It muſt therefore be own'd, that this Propoſition has a neceſſary notional Truth, *i. e.* ſince the Notion or Idea of *God* neceſſarily includes the Idea of *neceſſary Exiſtence*, (which is by Conſequence a Part of the ſame Idea) therefore the Terms or Words, while determin'd to ſignify thoſe Ideas, muſt neceſſarily have a fix'd Conformity and Connection with each other.

But then it may be obſerv'd, that this *notional* or *ideal Truth* (which is all that can be inferr'd from one Term's being connected with another) does not by any Means demonſtrate the *real Truth* or the Exiſtence of an Object or Thing conformable to the Idea

Idea or Ideas ſignify'd by thoſe Terms. As appears by the former Inſtance.

From hence 'tis manifeſt, that the firſt and main Propoſition of *Des Cartes*'s Demonſtration, (*viz.* An Attribute which was clearly and diſtinctly perceiv'd to be included in an Idea, may be truly affirm'd of the Thing ſignify'd by that Idea) is falſe. For an Attribute may be clearly included in an Idea, and may by Conſequence be truly affirm'd of the Idea which includes it, when yet it can't be affirm'd of any thing ſignified by that Idea. For as the Idea (if a complex one, and capable of being form'd or compos'd by the Imagination) may well be without the Thing which it is ſuppos'd to ſignify, ſo many Propoſitions may be true of the Idea which are not true of the Thing. Conſequently, though I find Neceſſity of Exiſtence included in my complex Idea of a God or moſt perfect Being, and though I can clearly perceive its unalterable Connection with that Idea, yet it does not for that Reaſon follow that I may affirm it of any real Being, unleſs I was antecedently convinc'd (which muſt have been by ſome other Argument than this) that there actually is ſuch a Being as is conformable to my Idea: No more than it follows that I may affirm Power or Wiſdom of him antecedently to ſuch Conviction: For theſe are equally included in that Idea. This Argument therefore can't prove the Exiſtence of a God, but only a certain Mode of his Exiſtence already prov'd, *viz. Neceſſity.*

The other Demonſtration of *Des Cartes* is deriv'd from the Perfection of the ſuppos'd innate Idea of a God; and is to this Effect.

The Idea of an infinitely perfect Being, which I am conſcious of in my Mind, has greater Perfection than any finite Being was capable of cauſing it to repreſent. By Conſequence, 'tis impoſſible I ſhould perceive any ſuch Idea in my Mind, unleſs there be

a

a Cauſe of that Idea poſſeſſing as much Perfection as is repreſented by it. Therefore a God, or a Being of infinite Perfection exiſts, who is the Cauſe of that Idea which repreſents infinite Perfection.

This pretended Demonſtration is weaker, if poſſible, than the former ; and it ſeems unaccountable, that the *Meditations* of that Philoſopher ſhould gain ſuch Credit in the World, which had ſo little beſides the Novelty of the Method to recommend them.

What Perfection is there in the Idea even of an infinitely perfect Being, as it exiſts in the Mind, more than what the Mind may be ſuppos'd to have given it ? If we reflect, we ſhall ſoon perceive, with the excellent Mr. *Locke*, that we have no poſitive Idea of any thing as Infinite. We can't receive nor form in our Minds any Idea ſo great as will admit of no farther Addition or Increaſe. Whatever Idea we perceive at any one Time is plainly limited ; and the moſt we can do to qualify an Idea to repreſent ſomething of Infinity, is only in a negative Way, by not fixing any Period to the repeated Additions in our Minds. And whatever Materials we employ in forming or repreſenting ſuch an Idea, are plainly no other than what we have deriv'd from the Finite Objects we daily converſe with. But the uniting of borrow'd Ideas of particular Kinds and Degrees of Perfection, without determining any Limits of the Progreſſion, is certainly no ſuch Effect as ſhould neceſſarily require an infinitely perfect Cauſe. This we are ſenſible is ſufficiently within the Power of our own Imaginations. We can form the Idea of a Mountain without limiting any particular Height, by heaping *Pelion* upon *Oſſa*, and imitating the famous Labour of the Giants, though we ourſelves don't equal the Bulk of the leaſt of thoſe Mountains. And by Parity of Reaſon, we may form a like negative Idea of an univerſal, unbounded, or infinite Perfection, without having any infinite Perfection in ourſelves.

Another

Another Argument for the Exiſtence of God, which ſome derive from the Nature of his ſuppos'd innate Idea in our Minds, is to this Effect.

The Exiſtence of a God, ſay they, is poſſible, becauſe there's nothing contradictory in our Idea or Notion of him. But if it be poſſible, it follows that it is likewiſe neceſſary. For, ſuppoſing there is now no God, 'tis impoſſible there ever ſhould be any: Since Eternity, which is included in our Idea of him, can have no Beginning. His Exiſtence muſt therefore either be impoſſible, (which yet we clearly perceive it is not) or elſe he muſt now neceſſarily exiſt.

This is another plauſible Argument. But we do not want it; having ſo many others which have Strength as well as Plauſibility.

To ſhew its Weakneſs, it will perhaps be ſufficient to produce a parallel Inſtance.

If this Way of Arguing was good, the following Argument would be no leſs a Demonſtration. I have an Idea or Notion of a *Firſt Man with Wings*; and I find Nothing impoſſible or contradictory in this Idea. If then 'tis a poſſible Idea, I conclude the Thing is neceſſarily ſo. For if he does not now exiſt with Wings, then (ſince the Firſt Man can't be produc'd after any other) it follows that he can never exiſt with them. Conſequently, a poſſible Being would be impoſſible.

But this being manifeſtly a fallacious Argument, the former muſt be ſo too. For they are, I think, exactly parallel.

So uncertain is it to argue from the Notional Poſſibility to the real Exiſtence; and much more to the Neceſſity of that Exiſtence. For an Object may be poſſible in its abſtract Idea (*i. e.* there may be Nothing contradictory in the Idea of a Thing in our Minds) when yet, on Account of ſome external Conſideration, it may be incapable of exiſting.

That then which made the former Argument ſo plauſible, was its confounding an external Conſideration, *viz.* the Want of Beginning, with the internal Attributes of the Divine Nature. For a Relation to the Parts and Periods of Duration is ſomewhat merely extrinſical. But the abſtract Idea of a God, which was firſt conſider'd as poſſible in that Argument, included no ſuch Relation. And therefore if the Deity could be ſuppos'd not to exiſt, yet his abſtract Idea would ſtill be a Poſſibility (or would include no Repugnance, in its ſelf conſider'd) tho' on Account of that external Conſideration, he could never exiſt.

Spinoza gives this Argument a different Turn in his *Opera poſthuma*, *p.* 381. Says he, *Si tale Ens non exiſteret*, *&c. i. e.* "If ſuch a Being (*viz.* an abſo-"lutely infinite one) did not exiſt, it could never be "produc'd; and ſo it would follow, that our Minds "could conceive more than Nature could perform; "which he thinks abſurd.

But this Argument is founded on the Suppoſition of our having a poſitive Idea of ſuch an Infinite: Which that it is a vain Suppoſition, has been partly ſhewn both in this and the former Book, and more will be ſaid in the following Part.

PART the Second.

Of the Infinity of the Divine Nature.

CHAP. I.

THE Opinion of the poſitive or abſolute Infinity of the Divine Nature has ſo long and ſo generally prevail'd, that ſome, we find, take it for a Natural Notion, and tell us we need only read over

over the Catalogue of our *Innate Ideas* to obtain Satisfaction about it.

But because all Men are not as yet agreed, whether there be any such Thing as *innate Ideas*, much less, whether this be of the Number; and because 'tis very possible that Prejudices of Education may have crept into the List, 'twill perhaps be convenient to make it the Subject of our *Impartial Enquiry*.

As for the *English* Word *Infinite*, every one knows 'tis a Negative Term deriv'd from the *Latin infinitus*, which Word, as the Learned will inform us, was first coin'd to express the Sense of the *Greek* ἄπειρος; which properly signifies somewhat either without *End* or *Limits* in itself, or without *Bounds* from other Beings: Of which Senses the former is *Absolute*, the latter *Relative*.

The Word *Finite* admits of the same Difference of Senses; since a Thing may sometimes be consider'd as having Limits in itself, (which is to be Finite in the absolute Sense,) and sometimes as bounded by other Beings, (which is to be Finite in a Relative Sense.

In our Enquiry into the History of the Word *Infinite*, and its *Synonyma*, it will be needless to make a laborious Search into the Opinions of the *Eastern Nations*; both because we have no certain or complete Account of their Philosophy, and because their Sentiments could have no other Influence on the present Age, than by Means of the *Greeks*, by whom they were usually borrow'd and transmitted to Posterity.

Yet I can't omit the famous Paradox ascrib'd to *Hermes Trismegistus*, who is said to have taught, that *Deus est Sphæra cujus Centrum est ubique, cujus Peripheria nusquam*, i. e. *God is a Sphere whose Centre is every where, but his Circumference no where.* But since the Learned are not agreed, whether there was ever such a Person as this *Egyptian Hermes*, much

leſs whether thoſe Remains which are attributed to him be genuine, we may, it is conceiv'd, be excus'd from taking any further Notice of it.

Therefore, the Firſt (for ought with any Certainty appears) who aſſerted an *abſolute Infinity* was *Anaximander*. This Philoſopher, with his Followers, held τὸ Ἄπειρον, or *Infinity*, to have been the Principal or Original of all Things; yet this Infinity of theirs (on Enquiry) we ſhall find to have been no Deity, but a confus'd Heap or *Chaos* of *inanimate Matter*, from the caſual Mixture or Coalition of which they fancy'd the Univerſe with all its Beauty and Regularity to have proceeded.

This Method of Philoſophy was afterwards reviv'd by *Democritus* and *Epicurus*, who undertook to improve the groſſer Atheiſm of *Anaximander*, and to diſguiſe the Monſter in a more ſpecious and philoſophical Dreſs.

What Succeſs thoſe wiſe Projectors met with in ſo hopeful an Undertaking may eaſily be imagin'd. Having baniſh'd all Contrivance and Deſign, and left all to the Management of Chance, no Wonder if they made but bungling Work on't. Let us a little obſerve their Method.

And, in the firſt Place, theſe Builders of Worlds having prudently *ſuppos'd* the neceſſary Exiſtence or Eternity of Matter; their next Care was to ſet it a moving. This we may conceive was but a ſmall Difficulty to ſuch mighty Undertakers. 'Twas but to *ſuppoſe* Motion to have been alike neceſſary, and the Atoms (without the Toil or Fatigue of any Deity) could move as nimbly as the Stones of the *Trojan Wall* at the Melody of *Apollo*'s Harp. Having thus ſet every Duſt or Atom in Motion, and begun the imaginary Dance, their next Care was to provide them ſufficient Room. And leſt they ſhould have wanted Scope to exert their eternal Activity, they ſoon agreed, at the Expence of another *Suppoſition*,

to

to accommodate them with no leſs than an *abſolutely infinite Space*. But having once ſuppos'd ſuch an infinite or endleſs Space, they ſoon found themſelves oblig'd to *ſuppoſe* a like Infinity of their Atoms; ſince otherwiſe they could have born no Proportion to the Space, and conſequently could not ſo commodiouſly have been imagin'd to coaleſce into Worlds. Thus theſe three Principles of *Eternal Motion*, *Infinite Space*, and *Infinite Matter*, being once admitted, they ſoon loſt and bewilder'd themſelves among their infinite Worlds, where we ſhall leave them, and proceed.

By what has already been diſcover'd, it appears, that an *abſolute Infinity* was firſt introduc'd among the *Greeks* by *Anaximander*, and his Followers the *Atheiſtical Atomiſts*, and made the Attribute of *Matter*. Our next Buſineſs will be to enquire when and by whom it was firſt conſecrated or ſet apart for the Deity.

And we need not go far to make the Diſcovery. For *Anaxagoras*, the next Succeſſor but one to *Anaximander*, having, it ſeems, taken a more conſiderate View of the wonderful Frame of the World, and obſerv'd thoſe Signatures of Wiſdom and Deſign which appear in the Order and Beauty of its ſeveral Parts, was ſoon inclin'd to recall that Deity whom his Maſter had baniſh'd, and to own him for the Author of ſo noble a Work. For thus he began his Philoſophy with Πάντα χρήματα ἦν ὁμοῦ, &c. i. e. *All Things were at firſt mingled and blended together, till the* MIND *new modell'd and diſpos'd them into an orderly and beautiful Frame.* To this *Mind Anaxagoras* is ſaid to have given the Title of Ἄπειρος, or *Infinite*. For being ſtill in other Reſpects a Follower of *Anaximander*, and conſequently an Aſſertor of the abſolute Infinity of *Matter*, he found himſelf oblig'd to attribute a like Infinity to the *Mind* or Deity; ſince otherwiſe it could have born no Proportion to the Matter on which it was conceiv'd to act.

And thus the Notion of an *absolutely infinite Deity*, was deriv'd from that of *absolutely infinite Matter*.

Though several other Philosophers, especially of the *Ionic* Sect, became Patrons of this Opinion, yet we shall find that the first considerable Promoter of it was *Plato*. That this Philosopher was an Asserter of an absolutely infinite Deity, is, what I conceive, not likely to be deny'd. Therefore, instead of proving it from his Writings, let us proceed to consider his Character; it being that which may be of some Use to us in forming a Judgment of his Opinions. And this we may borrow from the judicious and impartial Monsr. *Rapin*, who in his *Reflections on the Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, near the Beginning, informs us, "That though *Plato* "is indeed a very florid and ingenious Author, yet "he writes with little Coherence or Method, de-"cides but little in his Discourses, and establishes "almost Nothing at all. That through his too "great Desire to be pleasing, he's too much for "telling of Wonders, and thence it is that the most "Part of his Discourses are nothing else but Fables, "Metaphors, and continual Allegories. That he "often affects to be mysterious in what he says, "and that 'tis commonly by Lying that he under-"takes to persuade Truth.

To this Character we may add the general Observation, that Mystical Divinity was first introduced among Christians by Derivation from the *Platonick Philosophy*. On which Account the Learned *Meric Casaubon*, in his Treatise of *Enthusiasm*, was led to make this Reflection, *p.* 69. "That how-"ever some of the Fathers have imagin'd the Phi-"losophy of *Plato* to have been serviceable to "Christianity, yet it has been the Occasion of "many Heresies among Christians, and that to this "very Day 'tis the common Refuge of contempla-

"tive

" tive Men who have run themſelves beſide their Wits.

But if we examine farther into the Matter, we ſhall find, that though *Plato* was the firſt conſiderable Promoter of this Opinion, yet the chief Advancer and Propagator of it was *Ariſtotle*; a Perſon indeed of an admirable Genius, but too guilty of an affected Singularity in his Opinions, and a perpetual Humour of contradicting others; as I think his greateſt Admirers muſt confeſs.

But to make good this Character, we need no other Proof but the Matter before us: For we muſt obſerve, that this his Opinion of the divine abſolute Infinity was neither entertain'd by him as a Dictate of his Maſter *Plato*, (whom he ſeems to take a peculiar Pleaſure to contradict and expoſe,) nor as the Reſult of free and impartial Reaſoning, but was a Notion which he rather appears to have taken up through the ſame Humour of Contradiction. For having aſſerted that odd Opinion of the Eternity of the World in its preſent Form; not perhaps becauſe it appear'd to him to be the moſt rational, but becauſe all the Philoſophers who went before him had held the contrary (as himſelf would perſuade us in his Book *de Cælo*, *c.* 10.) and being content to admit a Deity into his Hypotheſis (probably to avoid the Fate of *Protagoras* and other reputed Atheiſts) he conceiv'd himſelf oblig'd to aſſert his abſolute Infinity as a neceſſary Conſequence of that Eternity he had attributed to the World. For ſince he had deriv'd an eternal World by way of Emanation from the Deity, and had thereby made him the Author of the eternal Motion which he conceiv'd in that eternal World; and ſince he ſuppos'd that Nothing leſs than an abſolutely infinite Power could be the Cauſe and Preſervation of ſuch an infinite (or eternal) Motion, he thought himſelf oblig'd to aſſert an abſolutely infinite Deity as the only capable Subject

of that infinite Power. For this is his own Method of Arguing.

From hence then it appears that this Opinion, firſt taught by *Anaxagoras*, and afterwards ſpread and propagated by *Ariſtotle*, was taken up by both on the Credit of falſe Principles; if the *abſolute Infinity of Matter*, and the *Eternity of the World*, may deſerve that Character. However, ſince the bare Derivation of an Opinion from a falſe Principle is no neceſſary Argument of its being its ſelf falſe, we ought not from thence to take Advantage againſt it, but to be entirely determin'd by the Evidence of Scripture and Reaſon.

This Opinion being thus entertained by *Plato*, and his celebrated Scholar *Ariſtotle*, who beſides their great Wits had ſo many other Advantages above moſt Philoſophers to make themſelves believ'd and followed; no Wonder if it ſoon overſpread the learned World. Yet how many ſoever its Proſelytes were among the more modern Philoſophers, 'tis certain its Succeſs among the more Primitive Chriſtian Fathers was very different. Theſe we find were ſo far from thinking it any Part of their *Creed*, that they rejected it as an Impoſture of *vain Philoſophy*. So did *Juſtin Martyr* *, who for his Learning was ſtil'd *the Philoſopher*, and writ immediately after the firſt Century. The ſame did *Tatian* **, *Clemens Alexandrinus* **, and *Tertullian* †, the three other moſt celebrated Fathers of the firſt and pureſt Ages of Chriſtianity: And theſe have ſince been follow'd by *Scotus* *†, the moſt ſubtile of the Schoolmen, the learned Prince of *Mirandola* ††, and others.

And though it muſt be confeſs'd that the Arguments which the mention'd pious Fathers produc'd

* *Contra Tryph.* p. 283. *et* 357. ** *In Lib. adv. Gentes.* ** *In Paræn.* † *In Lib. adv. Orig.* c. 7. *et contra Marcion. Lib.* 2. c. 16. *† *Lib.* 1. *Sentent. Diſtinct.* 1. †† *Johan. Picus in Poſitionibus.*

for

for their *private Opinion*, in Oppoſition to this Doctrine of the Pagan Philoſophers, prove Nothing in a *poſitive* Way ſo much as the Strength of their Prejudice againſt it; yet it can't be deny'd that they conclude ſo far in the *Negative*, as ſufficiently to demonſtrate, that an abſolutely infinite Deity was no Object of the Primitive Chriſtian Worſhip.

But it was not long e'er the Scene was chang'd. For now the Church emerging from under the Deluge of Perſecution, the ſublime and myſtical Divinity of *Plato* was thought more ſuitable to the Splendor and Magnificence of the Chriſtian Temples than the Primitive Apoſtolical Simplicity. And the Age of Miracles being at an End, no other Method was judg'd ſo likely to reconcile Chriſtianity to the Reliſh of the learned Heathens, as the endeavouring an Accommodation between the *Church* and the *Academy*.

Yet after the Interval of a few Centuries, the abſolute Authority of *Plato* became ſomewhat limited, and *Ariſtotle* was admitted to a Copartnerſhip in the Empire of Science. However, though the Method of *Ariſtotle* was chiefly follow'd in the *Phyſical* and *Elenctical Philoſophy*, the *Divine Plato* ſtill held his Reputation in *Theology*.

CHAP. II.

THUS have we brought down the Hiſtory of the Word *Infinite* within the View of our own Times; till which, in this Reſpect, Matters have continued much the ſame.

Our next Task will be to make an impartial Enquiry into the Opinion of *Infinity* itſelf, as 'tis now generally entertain'd among us.

And Firſt, we muſt obſerve, that as Perfection, abſtractedly conſider'd, is a general Mode of the divine

divine Nature, ſo Infinity is conceiv'd as a Mode of its Perfection. So that *abſolute Infinity* is in Effect the ſame with that *abſolute Perfection* of which we treated in the former Book.

There's none who is but moderately skill'd in Philoſophy, but knows there is a twofold Notion of *Infinity*, and likewiſe of *Immenſity*.

The firſt Notion imports ſomething purely *negative* or *relative*, or denotes a Thing's being endleſs no otherwiſe than with Reference to other Beings: Which negative or relative Infinity may be underſtood as either *actual* or *potential*. In the former Senſe, the univerſal Space or Expanſion may be ſaid to be infinite; both becauſe by thinking we can never arrive at any fix'd End or Limits, and becauſe there is no other Space to bound it. In the latter Senſe, any given Line or Number is ſometimes ſaid to be infinite, inaſmuch as we can never imagine either to be ſo far increas'd as to render it an abſolute Contradiction that ſtill more ſhould be conceiv'd to be added *in infinitum*. And Mathematicians by Infinite ſometimes mean ſuch Quantity as is *indefinite*, or which either is not or cannot be defined or limited by us; as alſo ſuch Quantity to which a leſſer Quantity bears no ſenſible Proportion: Which laſt is a very improper Senſe of the Word.

The other Notion imports ſomething *poſitive* or *abſolute*, or denotes a Thing's being in its very Nature incapable of End. 'Tis in this Senſe that the Deity is uſually ſaid to be Infinite. And the ancient *Atomiſts*, with ſome modern *Carteſians*, have thought fit to attribute the ſame Infinity to Space and Matter.

Now 'tis a Maxim among Philoſophers, that all the Attributes of an Infinite are infinite in the ſame Senſe: And accordingly it has been uſual to aſcribe an abſolute Infinity of Kinds and Degrees of Perfection

tion to the Deity. This Infinity, when conſider'd with Reference to the divine Eſſence in general, is ſtil'd *abſolute Immenſity*; when with Reference to his Power in particular, 'tis *abſolute Omnipotence*; when with Reſpect to his Knowlege, 'tis *abſolute Omniſcience*, &c.

And here we muſt be ſo juſt as to obſerve, that this Opinion of an abſolute or poſitive Infinity recommends itſelf by a certain Air of Piety, and ſeems at the firſt Sight to be very agreeable to the Idea we find ourſelves diſpos'd to entertain of the Greatneſs and Majeſty of the Supreme Being. But ſince Religion does not conſiſt in an ignorant Admiration and blind Obedience, but in a Belief upon Conviction, and in a reaſonable Service; and ſince we cannot be too wary how we receive any Notion of the Object of our Religion without ſufficient Warrant; it can be no Want of Piety nor of Modeſty to make it the Subject of our Impartial Enquiry.

And therefore, our preſent Buſineſs being chiefly with ſuch Chriſtians who profeſs to own the Scriptures as the only ſufficient Rule of Faith, let us firſt conſider whether this Opinion may juſtly plead any Countenance or Authority from them.

The Word *Infinite*, in our *Engliſh* Tranſlation, though as apply'd to other Things it may be met with ſeveral Times, *viz.* in *Job* xxii. 5. *Nah.* ii. 49. and iii. 9. yet as it refers to God it occurs but in one Place, *viz.* *Pſal.* cxlvii. 5. where his *Underſtanding* is ſaid to be *infinite*. But if we conſult the original *Hebrew*, we ſhall obſerve that the Word which is here tranſlated *infinite*, properly ſignifies *Without Number*. And therefore, in the Judgment of any unprejudic'd Man, it can't here be conceiv'd to denote the abſolute Infinity of the divine Underſtanding (which none will aſſert to be infinite in Number) but muſt neceſſarily be expounded (as by the beſt

beſt Expoſitors it is wont to be *) with Reference to its *Objects*, or its *Effects*: Which are hereby aſſerted to be ſo numerous as either to ſurpaſs, or not eaſily to come within the Compaſs of human Reckoning. For thus we read of *Camels without Number*, Judges vi. 15. *People without Number*, 2 Chron. xii. 3. *Catterpillars without Number*, Pſal. cv. 12. *Virgins without Number*, Cantic. vi. 8. &c. By which Expreſſions, I am perſuaded, none ever underſtood an abſolute Infinity.

But though the Scriptures do not expreſly teach it us, yet are there not ſome Texts which at leaſt infer or imply it? What elſe can be meant by 1 *Kings* viii. 27. where we read, *That the Heavens, yea, the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain the Eſſence of their Creator.* And *Pſal.* cxxxix. 7. &c. *Whither ſhall I flee from thy Preſence*, &c.? But I think it muſt be confeſs'd, if we lay aſide Prejudice, that neither of theſe can amount to a ſufficient Proof. For though the *Heaven of Heavens* (or the utmoſt Heaven, as the *Hebraiſm* imports) cannot contain the Eſſence of the Deity, does it therefore follow, that it is *abſolutely* infinite? Certainly no more than if it had been ſaid, the Earth or Air cannot contain it. For ſince the Heavens are by thoſe very Words aſſerted to be of a finite Extent, (which, by the Way, is no weak Argument to prove the Finiteneſs of the material Univerſe;) 'tis evident that they can bear no greater Proportion to an abſolutely infinite Being than the Earth or Air, or even the minuteſt Particle of Duſt. And therefore to infer the abſolute Infinity of the divine Eſſence from a Compariſon with the Heavens (though the greateſt and moſt capacious of created Beings) would be no leſs impertinent, than to make the ſame Inference from a Compariſon with the moſt

* *Sapientiæ ejus non eſt numerus*; i. e. *Rerum quarum Intelligentiam habet.* Sic. *Mus. Vel eorum quæ ſapienter fecit.* Ut *Geſen. Camp. Moller. &c.*

di-

diminutive Thing in Nature; ſince the greateſt and the leaſt of finite Beings muſt bear an equal Diſproportion to ſuch an Infinite. And as for the latter Text, it can't neceſſarily import any more than the former. For it proves nothing but the divine *Omnipreſence*, which may very well be admitted without the Suppoſition of a poſitive or abſolute Infinity with Reſpect to Space: As may be fully ſhewn hereafter.

But *whatever is not read, or may not be prov'd by the Scriptures, is not to be requir'd of any Man that it ſhould be believ'd as an Article of Faith*; according to the Fourth Article of the Church of *England*.

And as this Opinion is neither ſupported by Scripture, nor authorized by the Articles of our Church, ſo it ſeems to have no ſolid Foundation in Reaſon. 'Tis freely confeſs'd, that nothing can be more evident from Reaſon (as 'tis hop'd we have elſewhere made appear) than that the Eternal Being is the neceſſary Subject of all poſſible Perfections. But this, 'tis conceiv'd, he may very well be, though this Opinion ſhould not be admitted. For certainly that Being poſſeſſes the greateſt poſſible Perfection with Reſpect to *Space*, which actually includes all Space, ſo as to be every where eſſentially preſent; or whoſe Eſſence ſurpaſſes all Things, and beyond which nothing either is or can be. That Being is moſt perfect with Reſpect to *effective Power*, whoſe Ability extends to whatever is an Object of ſuch Power. That Being can't but be moſt perfect with Reſpect to *Knowledge*, which fully comprehends or knows whatever is a capable Object of Knowledge. And in ſhort, the utmoſt poſſible Perfection may very well exiſt without any abſolute Infinity of any Sort; as hath been already ſhewn in the former Book, and will, it's hop'd, more fully appear hereafter.

But

But as it can't be ſuppos'd that an Opinion which has ſo long prevail'd among the Learned, ſhould want the Support of ſpecious Arguments, we ſhall now proceed to conſider their Force.

Arg. I. The great Argument which of late has been us'd as little leſs than a Demonſtration of the abſolute Infinity as well as Exiſtence of the Deity, is deriv'd from that *innate Idea* of an abſolutely infinite Being, which is ſaid to be in every Man. This (as we before obſerved) is the Argument of Monſ. *Des Cartes*. For that ingenious Author having ſo far proceeded in his Doubts, in the Beginning of his *Meditations*, as to queſtion the Reality of his Senſes, and all his Ideas deriv'd from ſenſible Objects, and having thereby excluded all ſuch Proofs of the Exiſtence of a God, whoſe Credit depended on the Veracity of their Teſtimony, he found himſelf oblig'd to ſearch out ſome other Proof from what he could diſcover within his own Mind, by the Help of which he might demonſtrate the Exiſtence of a Deity, and thereby lay a Foundation for Certainty in other Matters.

Wherefore, in Purſuance of his Deſign, having laid it down for a Principle, that (though all the Informations of his external Senſes might poſſibly prove falſe and deluſive, yet) *whatever he clearly and diſtinctly perceiv'd in his own Mind, without Derivation from external Objects, muſt of Neceſſity be true*; and then diſcovering, as he thought, an Idea of an abſolutely infinite Being impreſs'd on his Mind, which contain'd greater Perfection than it could derive either from the immediate Inſtrumentallity of his external Senſes, or from the Power of his own Imagination, he thence proceeded to conclude, that ſuch an infinite Being exiſted; ſince nothing leſs than ſuch an infinite Being could be a ſufficient Cauſe of that Idea.

This

This Argument plainly ſuppoſes Two Things.

1. It ſuppoſes that we have ſuch an Idea of a Being infinite in all Perfections, as could not be deriv'd from the Power of our own Imaginations working on the Ideas tranſmitted from ſenſible Objects; and therefore,

2. That it was innate, or born with us.

As for the former Suppoſition; it has already been obſerv'd, that whatever Idea we may be ſaid to have of an Infinite, it can in Reality be no other than a Negative one, and conſequently no ſufficient Reaſon can be aſſign'd, why the Perfection of that Idea ſhould be ſuppos'd to be ſuch as to exceed the Cauſality of our own Imaginations.

And as for the latter Suppoſition, *viz.* That the Idea we are ſaid to have of a poſitively or abſolutely infinite Being is innate; 'twas conſider'd in the Beginning of this and the former Book, and has been refuted at large by the late judicious Mr. *Locke*.

Arg. II. Another Argument made uſe of as a Proof of the abſolute or poſitive Infinity of the Divine Being, is deriv'd from the Attribute of *Abſolute Independence*, and is to this Effect. If the Deity be not thus Infinite, it muſt be either becauſe he was limited by Himſelf or by another. That he was not limited by Himſelf is evident. For no wiſe Being can be ſuppos'd willing to abridge Himſelf, but rather the contrary. And that he was not limited by another, is no leſs evident. For no other Being was capable of ſo doing.

This Argument, as commonly underſtood, ſuppoſes Two Things.

1. It ſuppoſes, that whatever Being is finite, muſt have been made ſo by a proper Cauſality. Thus the learned Dr. *Scot* (according to the Senſe of the *Platoniſts*) explains its Meaning*; "God's Inde-

* *Chriſtinn Life*, Part. 2. p. 193.

"pendence

" pendence (ſays he) or his not being from ano-
" ther, neceſſarily infers his Immenſity (*viz.* in the
" abſolute Senſe.) For that which limits or makes
" Beings finite, is only the Will or Power of their
" Cauſes.

But certainly, if we judge impartially, that can't be reputed the proper elective Cauſe of Finiteneſs, even in created Beings, which could not have been the Cauſe of Infinity. For no Cauſe can properly be ſaid to abridge its Effect of that which it could not have beſtow'd. But if no Being can beſtow an abſolute Infinity on its Effect, and if what can't beſtow it can't with any Propriety be ſaid to refuſe or withhold it, or to chuſe to produce the contrary by a poſitive Cauſality; it ſeems that the Reaſon why an Effect is finite could not be the Will or Power of its Cauſe, but an abſolute Neceſſity in the Nature of Things.

2. This Argument ſuppoſes that the Deity's being ſuch as he is, proceeded from his own Pleaſure or Choice. Thus the learned Monſ. *Le Clerc* unriddles it's Meaning; ſays he *, *Quando cogitamus Deum ab omni Æternitate extitiſſe nec quidquam eorum quæ habet ab alio accepiſſe, ſed per ſe et Naturâ ſuâ ſemper habuiſſe, eo facilè devenimus ut ejus Proprietates eſſe Infinitas agnoſcamus. Etenim qui tantæ Preſtantiæ eſt ut Duratione infinitâ eſt præditus atque nihil ab ullo Ente acceperit, nullos etiam Proprietatum terminos habere poteſt. Proprietates Finitas eæ Naturæ habent quæ eas ab aliâ ipſis Fines ſtatuente acceperunt; non quæ ſibi ipſa, ſi ita loqui licet, pro Arbitrio quæ voluit dedit.* i. e. " When we conſider that God exiſted
" from all Eternity, and naturally and independent-
" ly enjoy'd whatever he poſſeſſes, without being
" Debtor to any other, thence we are eaſily indu-
" ced to acknowledge his Perfection to be Infinite.
" For ſo excellent a Nature as was of infinite Du-

* *Pneumat.* p. 172. 173.

" ration,

" ration, and was no way indebted to any other,
" can conſequently have no Bounds of its Properties.
" For ſuch Natures only have finite Properties,
" which receiv'd them from ſome limiting Cauſe;
" not ſuch an one as (if I may ſo ſpeak) confer'd
" on itſelf whatever Perfections it pleas'd.

This, we ſee, is confeſs'd to be the Senſe and Import of the preſent Argument: By which it appears, that none can become its Proſelyte till he be brought to ſpeak ſeriouſly in the Style of *Plato* * and *Des Cartes* **, and to aſſert the Deity produc'd himſelf by a proper Cauſality: Which Aſſertion, it is conceiv'd, can need no Confutation; but muſt on the contrary, be allowed to be a ſufficient Confutation of any Principle from which it clearly and naturally derives. Yet in this *Plato* is imitated by *Lactantius*, when he ſays, *Deus ſeipſum fecit*; The Deity produc'd Himſelf; and that therefore he is *Talis qualem Seipſum eſſe voluit*, ſuch as he will'd Himſelf to be. And *Plotinus*, one of *Plato*'s Diſciples, calls the Deity αἴτιον ἑαυτῦ, *his own Cauſe*. And he tells us, that ſince an abſolute Simplicity is reckoned among the Attributes of the Firſt Being, (which Simplicity, ſays he, requires that his Will and his Eſſence be reputed one and the ſame;) conſequently his Eſſence muſt be from Himſelf, for as much as his Will is ſo.

But of Abſolute Simplicity we ſhall diſcourſe hereafter, when we treat of the Conſequences of this Opinion of an *Abſolute Infinity*.

Some, I know, have endeavour'd to ſoften thoſe harſh Expreſſions, and have inform'd us, that by the Deity's being the *Cauſe of Himſelf*, no more is meant, than that he contains in Himſelf a neceſſary Reaſon of his own Exiſtence. But though ſuch Language may be capable of a leſs offenſive Senſe

* *De Repub. Lib.* 18. ** *Medit. p.* 57, 58.

in the Mouths of others, yet 'tis clear, that the Propoſers of this Argument (if they intend to prove any thing) are reduc'd to the Neceſſity of uſing it in the moſt abſurd and indefenſible Senſe. For a Being's not abridging or limiting itſelf is ſomewhat purely negative, and therefore can't alone infer ſuch an Infinity; which, though conceiv'd in a negative Manner, and expreſs'd by a negative Word, is aſſerted to be moſt highly poſitive in itſelf, and not only not to exclude, but actually to include an endleſs Progreſſion of Kinds and Degrees of Perfection.

Arg. III. Again, 'tis uſual with the Aſſertors of a poſitive or abſolute Infinity, to borrow a Proof from the Nature of *Creation.* Since nothing leſs, ſay they, than an abſolutely infinite Power was ſufficient to paſs over the infinite Diſtance between not being and being in the Production of a Thing from Nothing, it follows that there never could have been a Creation, had there not been ſome abſolutely infinite Being who was the Subject of ſuch Power.

E're we conſider this Argument, it may not be impertinent to obſerve, what Pains have been taken by the Introducers of this Opinion of an abſolutely infinite Power (if I may ſo ſay) to chriſtianize it, and ſuit it to the Analogy of Faith. For whereas *Ariſtotle* made it an Inference from his Opinion of the World's Eternity by way of Emanation, theſe Gentlemen, by a ſtrange Logical Dexterity, beſtow'd on it a Relation to a very different Principle, and infer'd it as a Conſequence of the World's Creation.

But perhaps, 'tis no difficult Matter to manifeſt the Weakneſs and Inſufficiency of this Argument. For if to paſs over a Diſtance be to prove it finite, (as it moſt certainly is,) it follows that the Diſtance between Not being and Being was not infinite; ſince it has been actually paſſed over in the Wk of Creation.

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Whatever some may imagine, it seems to me, that the Distance between Not being and Being, is no other than such as is between Not thinking and Thinking, Not moving and Moving: For these are Terms equally contradictory; between which and the like Terms, if we suppose something analogous to an infinite Distance, it can, it is conceiv'd, be for no other Reason, than because contradictory Terms can never be brought together or reconcil'd. But though these Terms can never be brought together so as to render one and the same Subject both Thinking and Not thinking, Moving and Not moving at once and in the same Sense; yet the passing from one of these Terms to the other (so as is actually done when a Thing which was in any Respect unthinking or without Motion begins to think or move) is, I suppose, no passing of an infinite Distance; since 'tis what we see done every Day even by finite Agents. If in the Creation the divine Power had so pass'd the Distance between Not being and Being as to have brought together or reconcil'd these two contradictory Terms, by causing the World both to Be and Not to be, to be at once both Something and Nothing, this would, it is confess'd, have yielded somewhat like a Proof. But that the Supposition of a Creation obliges no Man to believe such Absurdities as these, has already been observ'd in the former Book.

Besides, the Degrees of Distance between Not being and Being, Nothing and Something, can't be more in Number than the Degrees of Entity or Perfection in the minuteſt created Being. But certainly these can't be asserted to be absolutely infinite, unless we will attribute an absolute Infinity of Perfection to the least and meanest of Creatures.

Notwithstanding what has been said, I think none will deny that the Act of Creation furnishes a sufficient Demonstration of the *Divine Omnipotence*; since

Nothing on this Side a Contradiction can be imagin'd leſs poſſible than a Production from Nothing. For that a Power may be properly Omnipotent or Almighty without being abſolutely infinite, may appear by what ſhall be ſaid under the Ninth Argument.

Arg. IV. Another Argument may be form'd, by comparing the Opinion of an abſolute Infinity with the vulgar Notion of *Eternity*. For may it be ſaid, Since we eaſily admit *Eternity* as a genuine Attribute of the Deity, though it is confeſs'd it ſurpaſſes our Imaginations to conceive an *abſolutely infinite Duration*; why ſhould any Man be backward to believe an *abſolute Immenſity*, for no other Reaſon, than becauſe he can't comprehend an *abſolutely infinite Subſtance?* And this is, perhaps, the Argument which has ſeem'd of greateſt Weight to moſt conſidering Men.

But to this, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, may be reply'd,

1. That the Reaſon why any intelligent Man either doubts of or disbelieves an *abſolute Immenſity*, is not merely becauſe he can't comprehend it. For ſuch a Perſon can't but be ſenſible that many things may be incomprehenſible to us, that are not inconſiſtent with the clear Ideas which he has in his Mind. But it muſt chiefly be becauſe of the ſuppos'd Abſurdity of that Opinion, or its Inconſiſtence with his clear and diſtinct Ideas.

2. That ſuppoſing the Compariſon between any two Opinions to be juſt with Reference to ſome Analogy or Similitude that we may conceive, yet if they don't appear to be equally founded on Reaſon, the bare Similitude between their Notions can't be ſufficient to oblige us to entertain them with the ſame Degree of Aſſent. But that there's no little Difference between theſe two Opinions in this Reſpect, is too evident to be deny'd. To disbelieve the Exiſtence

iſtence of an eternal Being, is to ſuppoſe the groſſeſt of Contradictions, *viz.* the Production of the Firſt Cauſe. For which Reaſon, (as we elſewhere obſerv'd) there never was a Philoſopher in his right Wits but he aſſerted ſomewhat that was Eternal. *Anaximander*, though he deny'd the Exiſtence of a God, yet attributed Eternity to Matter and Motion. And if he likewiſe aſſerted an Immenſity of Space in the abſolute Senſe, 'twas not merely for its own Sake, but chiefly perhaps on Account of its Connection with the Eternity of Motion which he found himſelf oblig'd to ſuppoſe. But we have already mentioned divers, and might have added more, who have rejected the Opinion of the *Divine Abſolute Immenſity*. A ſufficient Argument that the Attributes of *Eternity* and *Immenſity in the abſolute Senſe*, are very different either in Point of Reaſon, or at leaſt, of Evidence.

I confeſs, *Des Cartes*, and a certain learned Writer of our own *, have been pleas'd to affirm, that to aſſert *an End of Space*, is to aſſert a Contradiction. Their Meaning is, That if the univerſal Space be finite, it muſt be bounded by ſomewhat which likewiſe is Space. And indeed if this were a neceſſary Conſequence, the Contradiction would be too evident to be denied. But, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, the *Ends* of Things are abſolute or independent on their being bounded or encompaſſed by any Thing without them; being in Reality nothing diſtinct from the Things themſelves. For what is it to have *Ends*, but to have *Extremities?* If it was not ſo, then the immediate Reaſon of a Thing's being finite, would be no other than the Neighbourhood of the ſurrounding Beings. But who will aſſert the ſurrounding Air to be the immediate Reaſon that the Globe of the Earth is of a finite Extent? If none will aſſert

* *Dr.* Clarke, *in his Reply to the 6th Letter*, p. 38.

it, then the immediate Reaſon of its being of *finite Extent* is plainly this; *viz. becauſe it hath Extremities or a Superficies*; which (though as Mr. *Jackſon* ſomewhere objects, it is a Part of itſelf) ſurrounds its Subſtance, and terminates or limits it on every Side.

But ſome will ſay, What Idea can we have of a Thing beyond which there's no Space or Extenſion? I reply, Though it ſhould be granted that we can form no Idea of it, will it purely from thence follow that 'tis in itſelf inconceiveable? Will the Aſſertors of an *abſolute Infinity* affirm *our* Ideas to be the neceſſary Standards of Reality? Will they allow nothing to be poſſible but what's conceivable by *us*?

'Tis confeſs'd, we can form no Idea of an End of the univerſal Space or Extenſion. But does it follow that there can be Nothing in Nature but what enters into our Imaginations? 'Tis, I think, clear, there can be no abſolute Contradiction in ſuppoſing there is an End of any Extenſion whatever: For whatever Extenſion we conceive at any one Time in our Minds is finite; and if we cannot notwithſtanding attain an Idea of the univerſal Space or Extenſion as finite, yet ſince this is as well Space or Extenſion as any other, it can certainly be no Repugnance in the Nature of the Thing that it ſhould be conceivable as finite too; and by Conſequence, an End of Space or Extenſion may be conceivable to ſome other Being, though not to us. For that it is not the Nature of the Idea itſelf, but our own peculiar Circumſtances, and the Manner of our acquiring it, which oblige us to conſider the Thing as endleſs, may farther appear from hence. When we attempt to form the largeſt imaginable Idea of Space or Extenſion, we conſider its Idea in ſuch Manner as it is tranſmitted to us by our *Sight*. But our Sight repreſents it as a vaſt *Congeries* of innumerable Beings ſeverally ſurrounded by others. So that according to this Manner of conceiving, Space

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and the Neighbourhood of ſurrounding Beings (which likewiſe include Space) ſeem to be neceſſarily connected and inſeparable. There is therefore no limiting the Excurſions of our Thoughts by any conceivable End of Space; for ſtill the ſame Scene is repreſented to our View without End.

This is that Idea of *Infinity* of Space which is ſaid to force itſelf upon us. But let us now ſuppoſe we had no other Idea of Space or Extenſion but what we receiv'd by our Senſe of *Feeling*, in a State of Reſt. 'Tis manifeſt that in this Caſe, our Ideas of *Feeling* and *Space* would be always connected and commenſurate; and by Conſequence, we ſhould be ſo far from being under a Neceſſity of conceiving *Space* as *infinite* or *endleſs*, that we ſhould perhaps find it difficult, if not impoſſible, to conceive it to exceed the Limits of our own Bodies.

'Tis known to be the Method of the *Carteſians* ſometimes to run counter in their Reaſonings, and to argue, not that the Idea is true becauſe it agrees with the Thing; but on the contrary, that the Thing muſt therefore be ſo and ſo, becauſe the Idea in our Minds is ſo. Hence it proceeds, that having diſcover'd the Negative Infinity or Immenſity of our Idea of *Space* or *Extenſion*, they make no Difficulty of concluding that the Thing it repreſents is abſolutely or poſitively *Infinite*. But this Sort of Reaſoning becomes none who allows that Things may be otherwiſe in Nature than they ſometimes appear to be in our Phantaſies, and that it's the Office of our Reaſon to examine the Truth of our Ideas by comparing them with the Things they repreſent. For though 'tis confeſs'd we find ourſelves under an Inability of conceiving the univerſal Space with End or Limits, yet this is not an Argument of the Impoſſibility of an End of Space ſufficient to be oppos'd to the plain Demonſtrations which may, and hereafter ſhall be produc'd from Reaſon to evince the contra-

ſy: No more than a blind Man's Inability to form an Idea of Light and Colours, is fit to be admitted as a Proof that our Eyes perpetually deceive us. This Inability ought rather to be reſolv'd into the Influence our State and Circumſtances have on our Minds. For being ourſelves every Way ſurrounded by extended Objects, and finding (as we juſt now obſerv'd) that all thoſe Objects are ſeverally ſurrounded by others; we are apt to forget, or perhaps not well to apprehend, that the Limits of Things are nothing elſe but their own Extremities; to argue, with *Spinoſa*, that whatever is finite is bounded by ſome other Thing; and conſequently to conclude, that the univerſal Space or Extenſion, ſince there is nothing beyond it by which it can be bounded, is abſolutely Infinite or without Limits.

'Tis therefore, I humbly conceive, moſt reaſonable to conclude, that though the ſimple poſitive Ideas which we perceive in our Minds proceed immediately from ſomething real without us; (ſince the Mind can't form any *materially* new Idea;) yet compound and negative Ideas yield no ſuch infallible Proofs of the Exiſtence of any external Objects from whence they immediately proceed. For we experience in ourſelves a Power both of uniting the Ideas of Things that never were united in Nature, and of forming Negations arbitrarily and at Pleaſure: Or if not form'd by our own Will and Pleaſure, they may be unavoidably deriv'd from the Nature of our State and Circumſtances. Thus, becauſe we have an Idea of *Space* or *Extenſion*, we may be aſſur'd there's ſomething in Nature from which the Idea immediately proceeds; for this is a ſimple poſitive Idea. And that there's ſomething external which immediately cauſes in us the Idea of *End* or *Limits* we are ſure for the ſame Reaſon, ſince even our Idea of the *End* of any Thing is poſitive. But that there's any real external Cauſe of our Idea of the

the *Endleſſneſs* of Space or Extenſion we can't be aſſur'd merely from the Idea itſelf, ſince that Idea is purely negative, and therefore repreſents no Being as poſitively or abſolutely infinite*, and conſequently, may have been deriv'd, if not from our own Will, yet from our particular and unavoidable Circumſtances, in ſuch Manner as was ſhewn. But to proceed.

3. If we ſhould add, that the Attributes of Eternity and abſolute Immenſity have as little Similitude or Agreement in their Natures as either in Reaſon or Evidence, we ſhould not perhaps want ſufficient Proof. For though it ſhould be admitted that the Nature of Eternity is well repreſented by the Idea of *Duration*, yet 'tis impoſſible to conceive how Eternity can be *now* an abſolutely infinite Duration. For ſhould we fix on any imaginable Point of it, yet (whatever *Boetius* in his Vulgar Definition may pretend to the contrary) there would be an inexhauſtible Duration ſtill to come. This alone muſt make the Caſe of Eternity quite different from that of an abſolute Immenſity; which neceſſarily excludes the very Poſſibility of the leaſt Addition or Increaſe. But 'tis, I think moſt evident, that neither the Idea of Duration is ſuited to repreſent the Nature of Eternity, nor is neceſſary Exiſtence capable of the Denomination of *Infinite*, as will be ſhewn hereafter.

Arg. V. Another Proof of the Attribute of abſolute Infinity, is uſually attempted from the ſuppos'd *Immenſity or Infinity of Extention*, or (which with many of our modern Philoſophers is the very ſame) of *Matter*. To this Effect M. *Le Clerc* expreſſes himſelf; ſays he, *Immenſitas Dei inde colligitur quod Materia videatur immenſa. Abſurdum enim eſſet Deum, qui multo plures Proprietates habet quam*

* *See Mr.* Locke's *Eſſay of Hum. Underſt.* part 1. c. 17. *Sect.* 13.

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Materia, qui eam pigram et immotam agit prout vult, eâ ita ſuperari, ut Partes materiæ ultra Potentiæ Divinæ Limites porrigerentur; quod tamen, niſi Deus eſſet immenſus, ſeu poſſet per ſe agere per immenſam Materiæ Extenſionem, ſtatueretur, &c. i. e. "The "Immenſity (or Infinity) of God is infer'd from the "ſeeming Immenſity of Matter. For it would be "abſurd to imagine that the Deity, who poſſeſſes "many more Properties than *Matter*, who moves "and actuates the ſtupid Heap as he pleaſes, ſhould "be ſo far excell'd by it, that the *Parts of Matter* "ſhould be extended beyond the Limits of his Pow-"er. Which yet we muſt either aſſert, or elſe muſt "confeſs that he is immenſe, or capable of acting "immediately in all Parts of the infinite material "Extenſion, &c.

This Argument is grounded on that Inability before ſpoken of, which we experience when we ſet ourſelves to limit the Excurſions of Imagination with regard to our Idea of the univerſal Extenſion. For 'tis the relative Infinity of the Idea that lies at the Bottom of the moſt plauſible Arguments for the abſolute Infinity of the Thing. 'Tis upon this Baſis alone that ſome have rais'd their Perpendiculars of infinite Lines and Superficies. Take away but the Power of Imagination, and thoſe Notions have nothing left to ſupport them in the Nature of Things.

But ſince by the Confeſſion of all Men, Nothing is more apt to deceive us than Imagination, 'tis a Thing unworthy a Philoſopher to ſuffer himſelf to be entirely determin'd by That, without conſulting his Reaſon, whoſe Office it is to curb and correct it.

Yet ſome (I mean *Des Cartes* and his Followers) confounding the Ideas of *Extenſion* and *Matter*, have by this Error of Imagination been led to aſſert the abſolute Infinity even of the material Univerſe; though they could not but at the ſame Time be ſenſible, that their Opinion in ſome Senſe render'd Mat-

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ter a neceſſary Being, by depriving the Deity both of a Power of creating a finite Whole at the firſt, and of afterwards annihilating any Part. I call this an Error of Imagination; for that Reaſon (or Intellect) does not concur with Imagination in the preſent Caſe, is, I think, moſt certain. For,

1. Reaſon will aſſure us, that ſince any aſſignable Portion of *Geometrical Quantity* (or *Extenſion*) hath certain particular Dimenſions, by Conſequence an abſolutely infinite or immenſe Extenſion (if really exiſtent) muſt actually contain an abſolute Infinity of diſtinguiſhable Dimenſions; or ſuch a Number as, by Reaſon of its Vaſtneſs, abſolutely excludes the very Poſſibility of the leaſt Addition and Increaſe. But 'tis humbly conceiv'd, that ſuch an abſolutely infinite Arithmetical Quantity (or Number) is a pure Impoſſibility. For after Millions of Ages ſpent in adding Millions of Millions together, 'tis evident that the Number will be no leſs finite than it was at the firſt. And ſo there will ſtill be the ſame Poſſibility of adding on and increaſing for ever. If any Man will deny this, he ought to aſſign a Reaſon, why, after having arriv'd at any particular Number, it ſhould then become an abſolute Impoſſibility or Contradiction for it to increaſe rather than before. But there is no poſſible Number but may be produced by Addition and Increaſe; otherwiſe Number muſt ceaſe to be Number.

Thus the very Method by which our Minds attain their negative Idea of the Infinity of Space or Extenſion (which is by repeated Additions of Dimenſions without End) ſerves as a Demonſtration of the abſolute Impoſſibility of a poſitive or abſolute Infinity of Space or Extenſion in Nature. For if an abſolutely infinite Increaſe of Number by Addition be therefore impoſſible, becauſe 'tis the very Nature of Infinity never to be replete; 'tis manifeſt that an abſolutely infinite Extenſion or Space (or an abſo-

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lutely infinite Number of Dimenſions) muſt be equally impoſſible for the ſame Reaſon.

This Way of Arguing, Mr. *Locke* thinks ſufficient to prove the Impoſſibilty of a poſitive Idea of Infinity in our Minds. And 'tis difficult to imagine why it ſhould not equally prove the Impoſſibility of a poſitive Infinity in Nature. For different Dimenſions are as diſtinguiſhable in Nature as in our Imaginations. A poſitive or abſolute Infinity of Numbers of Dimenſions, if it be abſurd in itſelf, and therefore impoſſible in Idea, can't but be equally impoſſible in Nature. Not that our Ideas are the adequate Meaſures of Reality; but becauſe what is abſurd or inconſiſtent in itſelf, can't but be impoſſible both in Idea and Reality.

But here the *Spinoſiſts* will tell us, that Diſtinction and Number of Parts and Dimenſions are mere Non-entities or Chimera's, and therefore not to be conſider'd in the preſent Argument. For, ſay they, whatever Diviſion or Diſtinction of Subſtance we are apt to believe, is no other than a Miſreport of our Senſes; which are eaſily deceiv'd by Appearances, and can't penetrate into the true Nature of Subſtance, which though repreſented to them under innumerable Modifications, is yet in Reality, but one and indiviſible *.

I reply, Though according to the Syſtem of *Spinoſa*, who defines *Subſtance* in Terms which import an abſolute Self-Subſiſtence or Independence, it would follow that it's but one Being: yet it could not follow even from thence, that there's no Diſtinction in that Being. But ſince beſides the original or independent Subſtance or Being, there's another Sort of Beings, (which as was prov'd in the former Book) deriv'd their Exiſtence from him, and which, as being the real ultimate Subjects of pecu-

* Spinoſa *in Ep.* 21.

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liar Attributes, may (as was obſerv'd) very properly come under the Notion of *Subſtance* too, there can be no Colour of Reaſon to doubt of the Reality of that Diſtinction and Variety, which we perceive among thoſe inferior dependent Beings. For 'tis plain, there's Nothing in their Natures inconſiſtent with the Notion even of a real Diviſion. And conſequently, we may and muſt conſider Diſtinction and Number of Parts and Dimenſions as real Attributes of ſuch Beings. But in the preſent Argument, we need not ſuppoſe any real Diviſibility. 'Tis enough for our Purpoſe to have only ſuppos'd Extenſion to be mentally diviſible, *i. e.* diſtinguiſhable. For Diſtinction in Nature yields as real a Foundation of Number as a proper Diviſion.

Others, on the contrary, will perhaps object, that Matter, as ſuch, is infinitely diviſible, and that an infinite Diviſibility can imply no leſs than an actual Infinity of Parts and Dimenſions. That by Conſequence, 'tis unreaſonable to deny the Poſſibility of an abſolutely infinite Extenſion on Account of the ſuppos'd Abſurdity of its containing an actually infinite Number of Parts, when at the ſame Time we are obliged to own ſuch an actual Infinity of Parts in the leaſt imaginable Portion of it. But this Objection will be found to have no Weight in the Reply to the following Argument.

2. Reaſon will aſſure us, that as an abſolute Nothing can bear no Proportion to any real Quantity; ſo on the contrary, all real Quantity, how minute ſoever, muſt of Neceſſity bear ſome Proportion to all other Quantity of the ſame Kind. For this Proportionateneſs reſulting from the very Nature of Quantity conſider'd abſolutely or in itſelf, can't poſſibly be taken away by any merely relative Conſideration whatſoever. Therefore, ſince we are Witneſſes of the actual Exiſtence of a great Variety of quantitative Parts, it would follow, that if the whole

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was abſolutely infinite, theſe finite Parts muſt ſeverally bear a real (though not a ſenſible) Proportion to an abſolutely infinite Whole. But if ſo, then ſuch an infinite Quantity, by the Subſtraction or Annihilation but of a ſingle Particle, would become finite. Conſequently, the Difference between *finite* and *abſolutely infinite*, would conſiſt in a ſingle quantitative Part; and abſolute Infinity would be the Attribute of a certain determin'd or limited Quantity; than which nothing can be more abſurd. For abſolute Infinity, in its full Latitude, can't but exclude all Limitation. This Reaſoning is clearly founded on the very Nature of Quantity, and cannot be deſtroy'd without deſtroying Quantity itſelf.

This will appear beyond Contradiction, by the very Evaſion made uſe of by ſome, who tell us, that finite Quantities are not to be conceiv'd as aliquot or proportionate Parts of an Infinite, but as mere Mathematical Points that bear no Proportion at all *: For ſince Mathematical Points are mere Nothings or Creatures of Imagination (as well as infinite Lines and Superficies) 'tis in Effect to ſay, we muſt repute the ſeveral Parts of Geometrical or extended Quantity, when conſider'd with Relation to the whole, as mere Nothings, deprived at once of Extenſion and Exiſtence. Wherefore this Evaſion is ſo far from helping the Difficulty, or weakening our Argument, that, in the Judgment of any unprejudic'd Man, it ſtrongly confutes the Suppoſition of an abſolutely infinite Extenſion. For hence it appears, that ſuch an Infinity can't be defended any otherwiſe than by depriving Extenſion, as much as in us lies, of its very Nature, or by denying it to be really proportionate, which is all one as to

* *Dr.* Clarke, *in his Diſcourſe of the Being and Attributes of God*, p. 37.
Mr. Jackſon, *in his Defence*, p. 97.

deny

deny it to have Dimenſions. I ſay, in general, 'tis to deprive Extenſion of its very Nature; ſince for the ſame Reaſon that we deny any conceivable Part of Extenſion to be thus proportionate, we ſhall be equally oblig'd to deny all others to be ſo. Yet ſuch Abſurdities we ſhall be reduc'd to, if we will not allow the Opinion of an abſolutely infinite Extenſion to be itſelf an Abſurdity. For the Difficulties appear to be equal, whether we ſuppoſe Finites to bear a real Proportion to the imagin'd abſolutely infinite Whole, or not to bear any Proportion at all. There is therefore an abſolute Inconſiſtence between Extenſion (which can't but have Dimenſions) and ſuch Infinity or Immenſity (which excludes all Dimenſions.)

The invincible Evidence of theſe or the like Reflections had ſuch Influence on *Ariſtotle*, that having at the End of his Phyſicks concluded, that the Deity was not of finite Magnitude, (as thinking it to be inconſiſtent with his Notion of an eternal Mover) he adds, that he neither could be of an abſolutely infinite Magnitude, becauſe ſuch an infinite Magnitude was abſurd and impoſſible; and therefore upon the whole, he concludes him to be of no Magnitude at all. Accordingly *Gaſſendus*, the moſt learned Reviver of the *Epicurean* Philoſophy, (who was one of the greateſt *Mathematicians* of his Age) aſſerts Space to be infinite only in a Negative or Relative Senſe. And even *Des Cartes*, too timorous at firſt to aſſert an abſolute Infinity of Extenſion, choſe rather to aſſert it to be *indefinite** (i. e. *negatively* or *relatively Infinite*.) And if he afterwards aſſerted its Infinity in the abſolute Senſe, it was, it ſeems, Nothing but the neceſſary Reſult of his particular Principles.

Theſe two Arguments, founded on the Nature of Things, and not on our Imaginations, clearly de-

* *Carteſii Principia*, p. 7.

monſtrate

monſtrate an abſolute Inconſiſtence between *abſolute Infinity* (which if it be at all in a proper Senſe, muſt be an Attribute of Quantity) and *all Quantity whatſoever*. For there is no real Quantity but what is reducible either to *Number* or *Extenſion*.

But ſome will here object the Demonſtrations of Abſtract Geometry as Proofs of an abſolutely infinite *Space* or *Extenſion*. For Inſtance, 'tis plain, ſay they, from the *Elements of Euclid*, that to any given Point of a Circle's Circumference a Tangent may be drawn, of which only one Point falls on the Circle, and the reſt falls without it.

But to this it may be reply'd, that Abſtract Geometry conſiders Things only as they are in Idea: Therefore the utmoſt that this and the like Demonſtrations (or rather *Poſtulata*) can prove, is no more than this, *viz.* That no Space or Extenſion can by us be imagin'd ſo great, but that greater and ſtill greater may be conceiv'd *in infinitum*. But ſince Things may appear otherwiſe in Idea than they are in themſelves, it does not neceſſarily follow, that what is true of the abſtract Idea in our Minds, is true of the Thing as it exiſts in *Nature*. And tho' this and the like Demonſtrations muſt be confeſs'd to hold with Reference to any *particular Portions* of real Space, as well as with Reſpect to the beſt Idea we can form of Space in general, yet they cannot hold with Reference to the real *univerſal Space or Extenſion* beyond which whatever Space we conceive is purely imaginary, *i. e.* an *abſolute Nothing*.

It can, I conceive, be to little Purpoſe to object, That if the univerſal Space or Extenſion is bounded or limited by Nothing, it muſt be abſolutely without Limits, or Infinite. For the immediate Limits of Things are (as we elſewhere obſerv'd) Nothing elſe but their own Extremities. Which renders the Idea of Limits no leſs poſitive in the Univerſe beyond which Nothing exiſts, than in a Being ſurrounded

rounded by the *Indefinitely* or infinitely extended *Vortices* of *Des Cartes*'s Viſionary World. So far is the Notion *Spinoſa* gives us of *Finiteneſs* in his ſecond Definition and its Explication from being true, by which he allows that only to be finite which is limited by another Being of the ſame Nature. Conſequently, the Inference he draws from thence, *viz.* That therefore the univerſal Subſtance is abſolutely immenſe or infinite (becauſe it's impoſſible there ſhould be a Subſtance of the ſame Kind or Nature, and yet diſtinct from, it by which it might be limited) is of no Weight.

But ſome perhaps will ſtill object, that admitting ſuch a *pure Nothing*, yet ſince Bodies may exiſt where there's nothing to exclude them, it follows, that even *That Nothing* muſt ſtill imply a Capacity of receiving Bodies, and conſequently muſt come under the Notion of *Space*. But to this I reply, That where no Being is, there can be no Space, and a *pure Nothing* can have no real *Attributes*; whereas a Capacity of receiving Bodies being an Attribute which implies Space, can't but be a great Reality. For whatever arbitrary Diſtinction ſome have made between *Extenſion* and *Space*, they import Notions equally real and abſolute; as will be ſhewn hereafter.

Before we diſmiſs this Subject, I can't but take Notice of an Argument that may be form'd from the Principles of Sir *Iſaac Newton*, to prove the *abſolute Infinity* of the *material Univerſe*. The greater Bodies of our Syſtem are by him demonſtrated to incline towards each other by a mutual Gravitation. And we have Reaſon to believe the ſame of the remoter Bodies of the Univerſe. Now if thoſe Bodies are finite in Number and Extent, the terminating Bodies can have no Gravitation or Tendency towards any Thing beyond themſelves; and conſequently, having no contrary Tendency to balance their Gravi-

tation towards the interior Bodies, they muſt be continually approaching nearer to the common Centre of the Univerſe. But this, in Time, muſt occaſion no ſmall Confuſion in the World, and muſt very much reflect on the Wiſdom of its great Creator, for having eſtabliſh'd Laws ſo directly tending to the Deſtruction of his Work.

But to this, I ſuppoſe, we may reply, That if, with the ancient *Epicureans*, we conceiv'd *Gravity* to be a neceſſary or independent Property of Matter, and uniform or alike in all its Parts; or if, with the *Carteſians*, we thought ourſelves oblig'd to account for every thing by uniform mechanical Principles, we ſhould then be inclin'd to grant the Conſequence, and aſſert the abſolute Infinity of the material Univerſe. But ſince, in the former Book, we have from Sir *Iſaac Newton*'s own Principles demonſtrated, that *Gravitation* is no eternal eſſential Property of any one particle of Matter, and therefore in Effect no other than an immediate continued Impreſſion of the Deity, who being a free Agent, was capable of ſuiting its Degrees and Conditions to the various States of the ſeveral Parts of his Creation; we can be under no Neceſſity (by virtue of the ſame Principles) to ſuppoſe the great Bodies in the Extremities of the univerſal Syſtem to be ſubject to the ſame Degrees and Laws of Gravitation with thoſe in the interior Spaces: Which being duly conſider'd, the Difficulty vaniſhes.

Arg. VI. As ſome are us'd to argue from the ſuppos'd infinite Bulk of the World, ſo are others apt to do ſo from a very different Principle, *viz. Infinite Smallneſs*. Says Monſ. *Abbadie*, in the Firſt Part of his *Diſcourſe of the Chriſtian Religion*, p. 101. "Tho' "we could not prove *Magnitude* to be infinite, yet "the Demonſtrations of *Geometry* will oblige us to "own an Infinity in *Smallneſs*." This he ſpeaks with Reference to the infinite Diviſibility of Matter, and the

the actual Infinity of Parts from which it may be ſuppos'd to reſult.

But to this, 'tis conceiv'd, the following Reflections may yield a ſufficient Reply.

That *Matter* is infinitely diviſible, needs no Proof from the Demonſtrations of *Geometry*, being abundantly clear from this one Conſideration. Nothing is more plain, than that mere Diviſion can never effect the Annihilation of any Thing. But if not, then there will always remain ſomething capable of further Diviſion. For ſince the minuteſt imaginable Parts of Matter have upper and under and Sides, it can never be prov'd a Contradiction that what is above ſhould be divided or ſeparated from that which is under, nor that any one of the Sides ſhould be ſever'd from its oppoſite. But if it be no Contradiction, then it can't be affirm'd to be impoſſible to that Being to whom every thing not implying a Contradiction, is poſſible.

But what can we conclude from this to the preſent Purpoſe? Shall we ſay, that becauſe Matter is infinitely diviſible, therefore it contains an abſolutely infinite Number of Parts? But this, with Submiſſion, is a ſtrange Method of arguing, how ſpecious ſoever it may appear. For though any particular Portion of Matter ſhould be eternally divided by the Divine Power, yet the Number of ſeparate Parts reſulting from the Diviſion muſt ever remain finite. And the Reaſon of its infinite or eternal Diviſibility is not becauſe every particular Portion of Matter contains an abſolutely infinite Number of co-exiſtent Parts, but on the contrary, becauſe it is impoſſible that ſuch an abſolutely infinite Number ſhould even exiſt. For could it at any Time (even by the Action of Omnipotence) exiſt, then there could be no further Diviſibility; unleſs we can ſuppoſe a Number greater than abſolutely infinite. This infinite or eternal Diviſibility of Mat-

ter is therefore ſo far from being a Proof of the actual Exiſtence of an abſolute Infinity of Parts, that it effectually confutes it.

Beſides, though it would be difficult, as well as needleſs, to reply to all the Subtilties that might be objected, 'tis, I think moſt certain, that there can be no *abſolute Infinity of Parts* in a Subject that is not of an *abſolutely infinite Bulk*. For if ſo, then the Addition but of the leaſt imaginable Particle (ſince all Quantity is eſſentially proportionate) would render it more than abſolutely infinite; which is abſurd.

Again, if both the whole material Univerſe, and every particular Portion of it, conſiſted ſeverally of an actual or abſolute Infinity of co-exiſtent Parts, 'twould follow that there's an abſolute Infinity of abſolutely infinite Numbers of co-exiſtent Parts in the World, each of which contains as many real co-exiſtent Parts as the whole which they compoſe. For abſolute Infinity, in its full Latitude, admits not of more or leſs. An abſolute Infinity of Millions, if allow'd to be poſſible, would, I confeſs, import more than an Infinity of Units, and an infinite Superficies might be demonſtrated to be greater than an infinite Line, if the Exiſtence of an abſolutely infinite Superficies could be proved. But theſe are pure Imaginations.

As for the Demonſtrations of *Abſtract Geometry*, they may indeed prove the *Infinite Diviſibility of Matter*, already granted, but can never evince an actual abſolute Infinity of co-exiſtent Parts in *Matter* or *Space*; and by Conſequence, they can prove nothing to the preſent Purpoſe. When the Space between the *Aſymptote* of ſome *Hyperboloids* and a Line parallel thereto is demonſtrated to be infinite, this can only mean, that thoſe Proportions being incommenſurable, can never meet, though drawn out to an infinite, or rather indefinite Length in Imagination; but can never demonſtrate that the Reaſon of their

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not being capable of meeting in Nature, is the actual Infinity of the Parts of Space between them. If ſuch an actual Infinity of Parts exiſted in every Portion of Space, it would as effectually hinder the meeting of any other Lines whatever. And thus even *Zeno*'s Argument againſt the Poſſibility of *Motion*, grounded on the ſame Suppoſition of an actual Infinity of Parts in Matter and Space, would be no leſs a Demonſtration.

Yet ſome, I apprehend, may object, that ſuppoſing the infinite Diviſibility of Matter will not infer ſuch an actual Infinity of Parts, yet ſince it at leaſt infers an infinite or eternal Inexhauſtibility of Subſtance, it may ſerve to demonſtrate that there's an infinite Diſtance between *Matter* and *Nothing*; and by Conſequence, that the Power which created it, is no leſs than abſolutely infinite.

I reply, That there was no infinite Diſtance between *Nothing* and *Matter* (as was ſuppos'd in a former Argument) is as certain as that there has been a *Creation*: And that there's no infinite Diſtance between *Matter* and *Nothing* (as this Objection ſuppoſes) is as clear as that there may be an *Annihilation*. Conſequently, the Reaſon of *Matter's infinite Diviſibility*, is not becauſe it has an infinite Inexhauſtibility of Subſtance, or becauſe it is at an infinite Diſtance from Nothing; but 'tis becauſe Diviſion (as we before obſerv'd) is not a proper Means of exhauſting it or reducing it to Nothing. 'Tis certain, *Matter* loſes nothing of its Nature by mere Diviſion; and by Conſequence, though eternally divided, 'twould ſtill be at an equal Diſtance from Nothing. But 'tis no leſs certain (on the Principles of our former Diſcourſe) that the bare Suſpenſion of the Divine Influence but for a Moment would exhauſt or reduce it to the Nothing from whence it ſprung. 'Tis ſuch a Suſpenſion of the Divine In-

fluence which is the proper Means of Annihilation: But Diviſion can contribute nothing towards it.

Therefore for ſuch eſpecially who believe that Matter was created and is annihilable, to argue that there's an abſolutely infinite Diſtance between it and Nothing, only becauſe it can't be exhauſted or reduc'd to nothing by mere Diviſion, appears to be very unreaſonable. 'Tis as if a Philoſopher who has ſeen Ice congeal'd from Water by the Cold, and knows that it is reducible to Water by the Means of Heat, ſhould nevertheleſs contend that there is ſuch an infinite Diſtance between Ice and Water; for no other Reaſon, than becauſe it can never be reduc'd to Water by a bare Diviſion or Separation of its Parts. For Ice merely by Diviſion can no more become Water, than Matter, by the ſame Means, can become nothing.

As this infinite Diviſibility of Matter is no way ſerviceable to the Cauſe in which 'tis uſually engaged, ſo it may eaſily be turn'd againſt it. For hereby it appears undeniably, that the Ideas of *Great* and *Little* are not abſolute, but purely relative. For as there is no Extenſion abſolutely or infinitely little, or ſuch as to render it a Contradiction that there ſhould be a Leſs and ſtill a Leſs ſuppos'd to Eternity; ſo there's a Parity of Reaſon to conclude, that there's no Extenſion abſolutely or infinitely great, or of ſuch a Nature as to render it an abſolute Contradiction to ſuppoſe a greater and yet greater in an eternal Progreſſion.

Yet at the ſame Time, I think, it muſt be confeſs'd, that there may be an Extenſion (or Expanſion) which, not merely on Account of its own abſtracted Nature as Extenſion, but for ſome other Reaſon, may be affirm'd incapable of any real Increaſe: For in judging of the Natures of Things, we are not to conſider them according to their abſtract Ideas only, but as cloath'd with all their known

known Properties. But ſimple Extenſion abſtracted from all Properties exiſts no where without the Imagination. And the univerſal Extenſion, as it exiſts in Nature, ſince its State is ſo peculiar, may well be allow'd to have ſome peculiar Properties diſtinct from thoſe of any particular Extenſion whatever; which Properties can only be diſcernable by the Eye of Reaſon; for as much as the univerſal Extenſion, as ſuch, is not the Object of our external Senſes. But of this more may be ſaid in the Reply to the following Argument.

Again, The very ſame Reaſon which obliges us to *allow* an infinite Diviſibility of Matter, will, 'tis conceiv'd, no leſs oblige us to *deny* an abſolute Infinity of Extenſion or Space. For the Reaſon why we allow an infinite Diviſibility of Matter, is not becauſe we can form an Idea of ſuch Diviſion, or conceive in our Minds a Particle to become leſs and ſtill leſs *in infinitum*. 'Tis true, *Matter* is ſometimes ſaid to be mentally diviſible *in infinitum*; but, as I think, improperly. For when a Particle is by mental Diviſion reduc'd to the Smallneſs of the leaſt viſible Duſt, it ſoon eſcapes the Eyes of the Mind as well as that of the Body. The chief Reaſon then of our allowing the infinite Diviſibility of *Matter*, is immediately deriv'd from the Nature of *Matter*, which we hereby ſuppoſe to be in its very Nature quantitative or proportionate. From whence it neceſſarily follows, that the leaſt imaginable Particle of it having ſtill Dimenſions which bear a Proportion to each other (as Upper, Under, Sides, and Middle) we find ourſelves oblig'd to conclude, that it's no abſolute Contradiction or Impoſſibility for theſe to be ſeparated. But the ſame neceſſary Proportionateneſs which eſtabliſhes the infinite or eternal Diviſibility of Matter, is (as may appear from an Argument we lately propos'd) inconſiſtent with the abſolute Infinity or Im-

menſity not only of *Matter*, but of all *Quantity* whatever.

In fine, From this infinite Diviſibility of Matter it appears, that the Notion of an abſolute Infinity is unapplicable to any real Being. For one Reaſon why any thing is infinitely diviſible (or inexhauſtible by Diviſion) is becauſe (as we obſerv'd) the Parts which are ſeparated can never become actually infinite in Number. But if (even by the Action of Omnipotence itſelf) they can never become thus infinite in a State of Separation, ſo neither may they be ſuppos'd to be ſo in a State of Union. The Reaſon why the Parts which are ſeparated can never become actually infinite, is plain, becauſe as it is the very Nature of Number to be ever increaſeable, ſo 'tis the very Nature of Infinity never to be complete; which, I take it, amounts to a demonſtrative Proof, that the Suppoſition of an abſolute or poſitive Infinity (whether it be conſider'd as *actual*, or only as *poſſible*) has no Foundation in Nature.

This even *Ariſtotle*, e're he was aware, ſeems plainly to intimate in his Definition of *Infinite*. For whereas the more ancient Philoſophers generally and with Reaſon contented themſelves with ſaying, *That is infinite beyond which Nothing is*; he thinks fit to correct them by ſaying, *That only is infinite which has always ſomething beyond it*. Which, I take it, can import no leſs, than that it's the very Nature of a proper Infinity never to be complete.

Yet I find a certain ingenious Author * is not only confident in the general, that every Particle of Matter conſiſts of an actual Infinity of infinitely ſmall Parts (than which, according to him, nothing leſs is ſufficient to fill the leaſt finite Space) but pretends particularly to prove, that the Number

* *Dr.* Cheyne, *in his Philoſ. Prin. of Nat. Relig.* p. 18.

of

of organical Parts in Animals is thus infinite. "This, ſays he, "is clear both from the Nature of Senſa-"tion and Nutrition. For firſt, with Reference "to *Senſation*; there is not the leaſt imaginable ſo-"lid Part of the Veſſels or Muſcles but what is ſen-"ſible; and therefore, ſays he, the Organs in Ani-"mals which convey this Senſation are infinite in "Number.

But this Conſequence is not only built on the Suppoſition that the Parts of the Veſſels and Muſcles are therefore abſolutely infinite, becauſe infinitely diviſible, (which, 'tis conceiv'd, we have already ſhewn to be no very concluſive Method of Arguing,) but it ſuppoſes too, that each of thoſe imagin'd infinite Parts is ſenſible. But this is what I ſuppoſe could never be prov'd, though ſuch an Infinity of Parts were true. For the contrary is moſt apparent from the following Reaſons.

Firſt, We know that our Senſe of Feeling is proportion'd to our Circumſtances; being chiefly deſign'd for our Preſervation. Therefore it is ſufficient to ſuppoſe it to be diffus'd in ſuch a Manner thro' our Bodies as to be capable of informing us of ſuch ill Impreſſions from the ſurrounding Bodies as may be prejudicial to us. But the infinitely ſmall Parts of the neighbouring Bodies (if any ſuch Parts ſhould be admitted) are not ſingly capable of making ſuch ill Impreſſions; and conſequently, an infinitely ſmall Senſation is unneceſſary.

Again, 'Tis not only unneceſſary, but contrary to Experience. For we find that the minuter Parts of Matter are capable of exciting little or no Senſation even in the moſt ſenſible Parts of our Bodies. What Senſation may we then ſuppoſe an infinitely ſmall Part to be capable of exciting? Yet if there be an abſolute Infinity of ſenſible Parts in any Member, each of theſe may be affected by the Impreſſion

preſſion of an infinitely ſmall Part of the ſurrounding Matter.

And then as for *Nutrition*, ſays he, "Since there "is no Part of the Body that may not be increas'd "or diminiſh'd (as is evident from the Cure of "Wounds in all Parts through which the neceſſary "Fluids of the Body can paſs) 'tis plain that every "individual Point of the Animal's Body is the "Termination of an Organ through which the Nu-"trition may be convey'd.

But though every perceptible Part of an Animal be thus capable of Increaſe by Nutrition (as being ſubject to Wounds and Decays, and therefore requiring the Means of Reparation) will it therefore follow, that every infinitely imperceptible Part of it, though not liable to any Wounds or Decays, and by Conſequence needing no immediate Conveyance of Nouriſhment to repair it, is thus immediately capable of Increaſe by Nutrition?

But this Gentleman adds, "Moreover, ſeeing "the Canals of the Body themſelves do increaſe in "Bulk, may decay and be impair'd, every aſſign-"able Part of theſe Canals muſt be the Termina-"tion of ſome ſecretory Duct ſeparating a Fluid fit "to increaſe their Dimenſions, or repair their Loſ-"ſes, and ſo on *in infinitum*.

But ſuch Argumentation as this, few, I believe, will be diſpos'd to admit, without the utmoſt Neceſſity. And to make it appear that there is ſuch a Neceſſity to admit it, this Gentleman, it is conceiv'd, was bound to prove, that the moſt wiſe and powerful Author of Nature either could not or would not diſcover and make uſe of any other Method of nouriſhing the more minute Parts of thoſe Veſſels, but that which he makes uſe of in nouriſhing the greater Parts, *viz.* by proper Ducts and Veſſels. Till this be prov'd, his Argument for ſuch a *Pro-*

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greſſus in infinitum in Nutrition will be far from Demonſtration.

Arg. VII. Another Argument for the Exiſtence of an abſolutely immenſe or infinite Being, is derived from the Nature of an *abſolute Neceſſity* of Exiſtence: To this Effect. A Neceſſity which is abſolute in itſelf, or not depending on any outward Cauſe, muſt be abſolutely unlimited. For a Neceſſity which is not every where the ſame, is a conſequential Neceſſity depending on ſome external Cauſe. But a Neceſſity abſolutely ſuch, has no Relation to Place or any Thing elſe. Whatever therefor exiſts by an abſolute Neceſſity in its own Nature, muſt needs be abſolutely infinite or immenſe.

This is an Argument lately adopted by a very learned Divine *. The Sum of it appears to be this. If a Thing exiſts by a Neceſſity that was independent on any outward Cauſe, or (which is the ſame) is abſolutely neceſſary, it follows that it is abſolutely immenſe or infinite; becauſe Finiteneſs could only proceed from a Limitation of Neceſſity by ſome external Cauſe; which yet could have no Influence on that Neceſſity which had no Dependance on any Cauſe.

Before we reply, it will be convenient to give ſome Account of the Principles on which the learned Author proceeds.

Firſt, He eſtabliſhes a Neceſſity, which (becauſe abſolutely independent on any outward Cauſe) he infers to be abſolutely unlimited, and from thence concludes, that the other Perfections of the Divine Being (which he, in Order of Nature, conceives as poſterior to that Neceſſity **) are ſo too.

But this, with due Submiſſion, is, we conceive, to uſe *abſolute Neceſſity* in too large a Senſe, ſo as to

* *Dr.* Clarke, *in his Demonſt.* p. 45.
** *See his Anſwers to Letters*, p. 36, 37.

import

import a Neceſſity independent on a fundamental Reaſon, as well as on any outward Cauſe.

On the contrary, the Principles eſtabliſh'd in our former Book may be conceiv'd to be to this Effect. Some Perfection or Property of the Eternal Being (having an intimate Connection with all other Perfections) muſt be ſuppoſed to have been in its very Nature a Foundation or Support of Exiſtence, or to have eſſentially included Neceſſity. This particular fundamental Perfection is the Reaſon of the abſolutely neceſſary Exiſtence of the Divine Being which poſſeſſes all Perfections: So that the abſolute Exiſtence of that adorable Nature, is, according to our Manner of conceiving, founded on its Perfection; *i. e.* becauſe the Divine Being poſſeſſes a fundamental Perfection ſufficient to infer all other Perfections (which it even virtually includes) therefore that moſt excellent of Beings exiſts *with* (not *by*) an abſolute Neceſſity.

The particular Perfection, which I humbly conceive to have virtually included all other Perfections, and to have been the Reaſon, Ground, or Support of the Divine Exiſtence, is that of *Vital Power*. For as nothing can be ſuppos'd to exiſt without ſome Sort of Power (which being conceiv'd to be taken away, all vaniſhes with it) ſo nothing can be ſuppoſed to exiſt with a Neceſſity that is abſolute, without a perfect Power in itſelf. And as we cannot help asking, What was the Reaſon and Support even of original Neceſſity; ſo on the contrary, it would be extremely impertinent to ask, What was the Support of original Power? The Neceſſity of the Exiſtence of original Power was plainly of the Eſſence of the Power, or, which is the ſame, was eſſentially included in and founded on it. For perfect Power not only exiſted becauſe it was neceſſary, but it was neceſſary becauſe it exiſted; which makes its Caſe different from that of any other Perfection.

fection. And to ſuppoſe a Neceſſity antecedent to the original Power, is in Effect to ſuppoſe another Power before the firſt Power: Which is abſurd.

How perfect Power lies, as it were, at the Bottom of all other Perfections, and as a Root, ſpreads Perfection and Neceſſity, may appear from the following Reaſoning.

'Tis clear, that Imperfection can no otherwiſe infer a Poſſibility of ceaſing to Be, than as it preſuppoſes Impotence. From whence 'tis obvious to conclude, that where there never was any Poſſibility of ceaſing to Be, (*i. e.* where there was an abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence) there could be no Kind nor Degree of Impotence, or there muſt have been Omnipotence or the moſt perfect Power; and likewiſe that where there was Omnipotence there could be no Imperfection; or, which is the ſame, there muſt of Neceſſity have been all poſſible Perfections. So that the Neceſſity of the Divine Being muſt be conceiv'd as founded on perfect Power, which was, as it were, the neceſſary Source and Support of all other Perfections.

Here we may obſerve by the Way, that perfect Power (which is the Reaſon and Support of all other Perfections) could be no neceſſary Reaſon of an abſolute Infinity with Regard to Space. For, as will be ſhewn in the following Chapter, the Eſtimate of the Perfection of Power, as ſuch, is not to be made with Regard to Extent of Space, but with Relation to the Objects of Power; which Objects cannot be abſolutely infinite either in Extent or Number.

The Doctor and his acute Vindicator inſiſt*, that pure Neceſſity is the Reaſon and Support of the Divine Exiſtence, becauſe it doth not pre-ſuppoſe but infer Exiſtence, or becauſe 'tis firſt in the Order of our Ideas.

But I anſwer, If we conſider Neceſſity as an influential Principle of Exiſtence, (which is in Effect

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* *Mr. Jackſon, in his Defence*, p. 194.

to conceive it under the Notion of a *diſtinct Power*,) then indeed 'tis firſt in the Order of our Ideas. But if we conſider it as a Mode or Manner of Exiſtence eſſentially included in and founded on Power (which ſeems to be the genuine Conception of it) then it cannot be conceiv'd before the Power on which it is founded. For as the external conditional Neceſſity of the Exiſtence of dependent Beings is originally included in and founded on the Power or Will of their external Cauſes, and is therefore antecedent to their Exiſtence, ſo the internal abſolute Neceſſity of the Exiſtence of the independent Being muſt (if I may ſo ſay) be originally included in and immediately founded on an internal Power, and therefore ought not to be conceiv'd as antecedent to the Divine Exiſtence.

To ſhew that theſe are no needleſs Subtilties, I ſhall conclude with recommending it to be conſider'd, whether by ſuppoſing a Sort of antecedent Neceſſity of the Divine Nature, which is abſolutely unlimited, we ſhall not at laſt be reduced (with *Spinoſa*, who argues from the ſame unlimited Neceſſity) to aſſert one only Being or Subſtance, becauſe abſolutely infinite; and likewiſe, whether we ſhall not be obliged with him, to extend that Neceſſity to the Divine (and even to Human) Action, by ſuppoſing an univerſal Fatality. For as, by the Doctor's own Confeſſion, it cannot be explain'd how pure abſolute Neceſſity could infer Liberty *, ſo neither can it be explain'd how Neceſſity can be abſolutely unlimited, if it doth not extend to all Action as well as Exiſtence. For, as the Doctor himſelf expreſſes it. *Neceſſity abſolutely ſuch has no Relation to Place nor any thing elſe*, or (as both the Words and the Nature of the Thing ſeem to import) is every where and in every Caſe the ſame.

* *Demonſtration*, p. 52, 53, *&c.*

But

But to proceed to the learned Doctor's Argugument. I anſwer.

1. That though there was no external Cauſe to limit the original Neceſſity, yet it doth not follow, that either it or its Subject is abſolutely unlimited, merely becauſe the abſtract Idea of Neceſſity hath no Relation to Place or Limits. To give an Inſtance of the ſame Nature. The abſtract Idea of Neceſſity in our Minds, which has no more Relation to Variety than to Place or Limits, but is abſolutely ſimple and uniform, would (if conſider'd as the Reaſon or Ground of the Divine Exiſtence) infer that the Divine Nature muſt exiſt without the leaſt Variety of any Sort. But this would be directly contrary to Reaſon. For even Reaſon (to ſay nothing here of Revelation) aſſures us, that the moſt perfect Nature includes a real Diverſity of eſſential Properties (ſuch as Intelligence and effective Power) whoſe Notions cannot with any tolerable Senſe be confounded. For though even real abſolute Neceſſity (if not ſuppos'd to be founded on Perfection) could admit of no Variety of any Sort (as we obſerved when we diſputed againſt the abſolute Neceſſity of Motion) yet (if ſuppoſed to be ſo founded) though ſtill it be but one, or agreeable to no more Beings than one, it cannot but admit of all the Variety in that one Being that is included in the general Idea of Perfection.

This ſhews the Vanity of Arguing merely from abſtract Ideas. For the Properties of Things muſt be conſider'd relatively, or in their Connection as they exiſt in Nature, not abſolutely and abſtractedly as they exiſt in our Imaginations only. Thus, as to know ſomewhat of the Nature of the Divine Perfection, we muſt (as in the former Book) conſider the Nature and Import of neceſſary Exiſtence, ſo if we would acquire a more complete Notion of Neceſſity of Exiſtence, we muſt, it ſeems, conſider it

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in its Relation to Perfection. For though the Neceſſity of the Divine Exiſtence was ſo far abſolute, as it was not dependent on any proper Cauſe, yet it was ever founded on Perfection, and therefore was ſuch as the Nature of Perfection required. But the Nature of Perfection not only required Variety of Properties, but was *relative* and *determinate*; as was ſhewn elſewhere.

2. There is abundant Reaſon to aſſert (as we have done) that Finiteneſs, in the abſolute Senſe (or as importing a Thing's being complete, or having a determinate Eſſence) is no proper Effect of any Cauſe. 'Tis true, the particular Modifications of it may properly enough be ſaid to be caus'd, or a Cauſe may have the Power of producing its Effect either with more or leſs Limitation according to its Pleaſure. But we cannot ſay, in the general, that the Will or Power of any Cauſe was the Reaſon of the Finiteneſs of its Effect.

3. Finiteneſs in the abſolute Senſe (*i. e. Completeneſs of Eſſence*) ſeems plainly to be the Reſult of a Neceſſity in the very Nature of Things. For every real Being muſt have a complete and poſitive Eſſence, by which it determinately is what it is: Whereas our Notion even of what we call an abſolute or poſitive Infinity is, on the contrary, negative, incomplete, and indetermin'd, and therefore unapplicable to any real Being. We ſpeak indeed of Infinity as of ſomething poſitive; but this is to join Words whoſe Ideas can never be join'd by us, nor ſo much as prov'd to be conſiſtent with each other. For if *Finiteneſs* be poſitive (as was ſhewn) *Infinity* muſt needs be negative.

But if every Being, as ſuch, is of a poſitive, complete and determinate Eſſence, then how abſolute ſoever the Neceſſity is with which any Being exiſts, that Neceſſity and its Subject cannot but be determin'd or limited by its internal Reaſon, though not

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limited by any external Cauſe: Which Sort of Limitation by an internal Reaſon, is ſo far from an Imperfection, that it is the utmoſt Perfection or Completion of Being. This, as I humbly conceive, appears moſt plainly from the Doctrine of the *Trinity* in the divine Nature; which, however underſtood or explain'd, implies a Limitation with Reſpect to Number, included in the very Nature of Perfection (the internal Reaſon of the divine Exiſtence) which Limitation conſtitutes or *completes* the divine Eſſence, by excluding all Imperfection *. And even in Beings that derive their Exiſtence from a proper Cauſe, there is a Sort of peculiar Limitation which fixes and completes their particular Natures, and gives them the Perfection of their ſeveral Species.

Here I cannot omit the Teſtimony of a late learned and dignified Prelate of the Church of *England*. "The Truth is (ſays he) this Word *Infinite* confounds our Notion of God, and makes the moſt "perfect and excellent Being the moſt perfectly unknown to us. For *Infinite* is only a Negative "Term, and ſignifies (in the abſolute Senſe) that "which hath no End, and therefore no poſitive or "determin'd Nature; and therefore is Nothing. "An (abſolutely) infinite Being, had not Uſe and "Cuſtom reconciled us to that Expreſſion, would "be thought Nonſenſe and Contradiction. For "every real Being has a certain and determin'd Nature, and therefore is not infinite in this Senſe; "which is ſo far from being a Perfection, that it "ſignifies nothing real **.

4. Though the original Neceſſity doth not appear to be abſolutely indetermin'd or unlimited in itſelf, it might notwithſtanding be ſufficiently abſolute, and by Conſequence, ſuch as render'd it equal-

* *See the Chriſtian Religion founded on Reaſon*, p. 99.
** *Diſc. of the Trinity*, p. 77.

ly impoſſible for its Subject either not to be, or to be other than it is. That it could not but be ſufficiently abſolute, is clear, in as much as it was not in the leaſt dependent on or determin'd by any proper Cauſe. And that its Subject could not but exiſt ſuch as it actually does, is no leſs clear; becauſe (as we have already ſeen) Neceſſity was abſolutely connected with and included in Perfection, and likewiſe becauſe Perfection is in its very Nature fix'd and determin'd.

But, ſays the learned Doctor, "To ſuppoſe a finite Being to be ſelf-exiſtent, is to ſuppoſe it is a "Contradiction for that Being to exiſt, the Abſence "of which may be conceiv'd without a Contradiction. For if a Being can without a Contradiction "be abſent from one Place, it may without Contradiction be abſent from another Place, and from "all Places.

I anſwer, It has been already ſhewn, that a Being may poſſeſs all Space, or fill all Places, and by Conſequence be omnipreſent, without being ſtrictly or abſolutely infinite or immenſe. Therefore this Arguing doth not directly affect ſuch a Being. But ſince the Doctor ſeems to make our Conceptions the Standards of the Neceſſity of Things, by ſaying, that what we can conceive to be abſent in Part may be wholly abſent. I reply farther by aſſerting, that a Thing may be ſo neceſſary as to render it a Contradiction in Nature for it not to exiſt, though its Abſence may be conceiv'd without any Contradiction to our Ideas; or there may be a Contradiction in Nature that doth not appear to be ſuch to us.

We ſhall vainly amuſe ourſelves with abſtract Ideas, and ſhall eaſily be deceiv'd, if in every Caſe we will argue from them, which are the Creatures of the Mind, to the Things as they exiſt in Nature. The neceſſary Exiſtence of a Thing may not be the leſs certain, though the abſtract Idea of it in our Imaginations

ginations may not include any Necessity of Existence: Or a Thing may be necessary in its real Connection with other Things, though it may not appear to be so, consider'd singly or in itself. Thus for Example, Though the Attribute of Intelligence doth not include any Necessity of Existence in its abstract Idea, yet being necessarily connected with the other divine Perfections, we are assured it could not but exist.

Again, An abstract Idea may, on the contrary, seem to include Necessity of Existence, when the Thing it represents we are assur'd could never have existed abstractly, or without Connection with something else. Thus *Space* or *Extension* (though its Idea seems to include Necessity of Existence) could never have existed singly, or without Connection with something which is not Extension. For absolute Necessity of Existence (as was prov'd) supposes in its Subject a Connection of whatever Attributes import Perfection. Therefore as we ought not to consider That as necessarily existent alone, tho' seemingly necessary in Idea, which could never have existed thus alone in Nature; so, it seems, we ought not to consider any thing as incapable of existing necessarily in its Connection in Nature, merely because it includes no such Necessity in its abstract Idea.

The Question therefore (when we dispute about the capable Subject of an absolute Necessity of Existence) is not concerning either *Wisdom*, or *Power*, or *Space*, or any other single Perfection, but 'tis concerning Perfection in general. 'Tis not either *Power*, or *Wisdom*, or *Space*, or any other particular Attribute or Perfection (without Connection with any other Perfection) but 'tis the Deity who possesses all Perfections, who is capable of existing with an absolute Necessity, or without Dependence on our Conceptions, or any thing else.

Arg. VIII. Another Argument deriv'd from the ſame *abſolute Neceſſity of Exiſtence*, is thus delivered by the learned Dr. *Scott* *, " In conceiving of God, " we muſt aſcribe to Him *infinite Fulneſs of Being*, " by which he is ſo infinitely remov'd from Not " being, that he cannot but Be; and in thus con- " ceiving of him, we attribute to him neceſſary Ex- " iſtence.

But this, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, may admit of the following Reply.

1. That Fulneſs of Being (or Fulneſs of Perfection) may very well be without an abſolute Infinity, has been already ſhewn in the former Book **.

2. Such Fulneſs of Perfection as we then attributed to the Eternal Being (ſince it as effectually excludes all Imperfection as even the Notion of Infinity itſelf) may be well conceiv'd as a ſufficient Foundation of neceſſary Exiſtence. For ſince (as was then obſerv'd) a Poſſibility of ceaſing to Be can no where be found without Imperfection, we may in the general be aſſur'd, that where no Imperfection is, there can be no Poſſibility of ceaſing to Be; or there muſt needs be neceſſary Exiſtence.

3. An infinite Diſtance or Remoteneſs from *Not being*, is an improper Manner of ſpeaking. 'Tis true, the irreconcileable Oppoſition between two contradictory Terms, makes us apt to imagine a Sort of Space or Diſtance between them, to which we are us'd to give the Title of *Infinite*. But 'tis plain, that to talk of ſuch an infinite Diſtance, is to ſpeak improperly, and to expoſe ourſelves to the Danger of being amus'd with Words inſtead of Things. Beſides, that there's no Need of any real Infinity of Perfection to found ſuch an infinite Diſtance appears from the Confeſſion of the Aſſer-

* *Chriſtian Life*, Part. II. Vol. I. Chap. 6.
** *See* Ch. 4. B. 1.

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tors of an absolute Infinity themselves. For these (as appears by a former Argument) suppose a like infinite Distance between the Not being and Being even of Creatures; without attributing to them any Infinity of Perfection.

Arg. IX. Not only the Nature of Necessity, but that of *Possibility*, has furnished an Argument of an absolutely infinite Being. For I find a late judicious Writer arguing to this Effect *, "God, says he, "as he is the actual Cause of whatever is, so he is "the possible Cause of whatever is possible to be. "Wherefore since it is evident that no Limits can "be set by our Thoughts to the Number and Ex-"tent of Possibilities, but that more may be con-"ceiv'd to be produc'd, and still more without End "or Bounds; consequently the Divine Power must "be own'd to have an actual Infinity in Propor-"tion to this possible one.

To this I reply, 'Tis manifest that Possibilities in general can no otherwise be suppos'd capable of the Denomination of *Infinite*, than as any particular Line or Number which we may conceive in our Minds, may be said to be so, *viz.* in as much as we can't in our Imaginations arrive at any fix'd End or Limits of Progression in adding other Possibilities to those we first imagin'd. Thus we must conceive of the Infinity of possible Effects; unless we will be guilty of the Trifling of the Schools, and talk of Possibilities as of real Beings.

But though we experience such an endless Liberty of thus adding in our Minds, yet 'tis humbly conceiv'd, there's no arguing from Imagination to Reality, nor concluding that it must be in every Respect in Nature as in our Phantasies.

When we conceive an infinite or unlimited Increase of co-existent Effects, we consider it only as to its

* How, *in his Living Temple*, Part I. p. 161, 163.

Notional Poſſibility, or to that Non-repugnance which we conceive in the Idea of an infinite or endleſs Increaſe of Number and Extenſion conſider'd abſtractly or in itſelf. But an *abſtracted or abſolute Poſſibility* is a very improper Expreſſion. For Poſſibility, in a proper Senſe, has a neceſſary Relation to Power; and nothing can properly be ſaid to be poſſible but what is producible, or within the Power of ſome real Agent. If therefore we attempt to determine any thing concerning the *Real Poſſibility* of ſuch an infinite or eternal Increaſe, we muſt, it ſeems, conſider it not only *abſolutely*, or as not repugnant in its own Idea, but *relatively*, or as agreeable to the Idea of ſome Power of whoſe real Exiſtence we were antecedently convinc'd. If we firſt could demonſtrate the Exiſtence of an abſolutely immenſe Being who is the Subject of a Power thus infinitely extended with Reference to Space, we might then ſafely conclude, that there's a proportionable infinite Poſſibility. But 'tis humbly conceiv'd we can't, on the contrary, argue (as in the preſent Caſe) from the mere abſtract Notion of an infinite Poſſibility in *our Imaginations*, to the real Exiſtence of ſuch a Power and Poſſibility in *Nature*.

To explain this by a parallel Inſtance. If a Perſon, having firſt prov'd the Exiſtence of a Power that is perfect, and made it appear that perfect Power can't but extend to whatever is a capable Object of Power (or to whatever includes not a Contradiction) ſhould then proceed to prove that the Act of Creation implies no Contradiction, and at laſt ſhould conclude that therefore Creation is a Poſſibility (*i. e.* effectible by the Exerciſe of that perfect or Almighty Power whoſe Exiſtence he had before demonſtrated;) I conceive there could be no reaſonable Objection againſt ſuch a Method of arguing. But if, on the contrary, he ſhould ſay, I plainly perceive there's no Contradiction in the Suppoſition

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of a Creation or Production of a Thing that was not, and ſhould from thence immediately infer that a Power capable of Creation exiſts; this would be a very prepoſterous Way of demonſtrating; which yet is the very ſame Method with that of the preſent Argument.

Nor is the Perfection of Power, as ſuch, to be meaſur'd by the Extent of its Activity; but to be conceiv'd in a Relation to its Objects conſider'd in themſelves. 'Tis, for Inſtance, as great a Demonſtration of the Perfection of Power to produce two ſuch Beings as the Earth and Moon, whoſe Diſtance is comparatively ſo ſmall, as to produce two others as diſtant as the Earth and fixed Stars. Theſe Acts are equally perfect in themſelves; and if the latter ſeems to excel, 'tis not becauſe it argues a greater Perfection of Power in the Agent, but only becauſe it imports a larger Sphere of Activity; which yet is ſomething extrinſical to Power, and can by Conſequence, add nothing to the Perfection of it as ſuch.

But if the preſent Argument can't aſſure us of the Exiſtence of a Power *extenſively* infinite or immenſe, much leſs can it prove a Power *intenſively* ſo, *i. e. infinite in Degree.* For if (as we humbly conceive was elſewhere ſhewn) the mere Production of a Thing from Nothing is no ſufficient Proof of an infinite Degree of Power, neither could the ſucceſſive Production of any imaginable Number of any aſſignable Perfection amount to a Proof of a Power infinite in Degree. For every capable Effect is equally producible by a Power which is perfect. And by Conſequence, an eternal Repetition of the Act could not, in the preſent Caſe, yield a greater Argument of Power than a ſingle Act. The Being that can produce a Sand or a Drop from Nothing, can, by the ſame Degree of Power, ſucceſſively produce a Mountain or an Ocean. I confeſs, the con-

tinued or frequent Repetition of the ſame Act (eſpecially if in any Degree laborious) argues the greater Degree of Power in created or imperfect Agents. But the Caſe muſt be own'd to be different with Reſpect to the Creator of the World; unleſs we imagine him capable of Fatigue, and (with the abſurd *Anthropomorphites*) interpret his Reſt after the Creation in a proper and literal Senſe.

Arg. X. Another Argument which I find uſed by *Spinoſa* as a Proof of an abſolutely infinite Being, is as follows. Says he, "To be capable of not exiſting is a Sign of Impotence; and on the contrary, "to be able to exiſt, is a Token of Power; if then "whatever actually exiſts is finite, it follows that "Finites are more powerful than an abſolutely Infinite; which, ſays he, is abſurd. Therefore, "either Nothing at all exiſts, or elſe there is ſuch a "Thing as an abſolutely infinite Being *.

This Argument, for ought I know, might prove ſomething, if any Man could make appear that the Notions of a finite and ſuch an infinite Being are equally poſſible or conſiſtent. But 'tis humbly conceiv'd, the contrary will be ſufficiently evident to any that ſhall conſider what has been already ſaid, and what may be further obſerv'd in the following Chapters.

There's yet another Proof attempted from the *infinite Deſires and Appetites of the Soul after the ſupreme Good*. But this rather ſeems a Rhetorical Flouriſh than an Argument of Weight. Not to inſiſt upon the Reflection it ſeems to caſt upon the Wiſdom of the great Creator, by ſuppoſing him to have implanted in us Appetites abſolutely diſproportion'd to our Capacities, and which by Conſequence can never be ſatisfied.

* Spinoſa *in Eth.* Part. 1. Prop. 11.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

THUS have we finiſhed the Hiſtory and Proofs of this Opinion both from Scripture and Reaſon. We ſhall next proceed to conſider its *Uſefulneſs* or Significancy to the Ends of Religion and Morality.

In the former Book we diſcover'd abundant Reaſon to attribute Nothing to the Deity but what is moſt perfect in its Kind. For being neceſſarily exiſtent, and the Fountain from which all other Natures derived, we have invincible Evidence that he poſſeſſes the higheſt Perfection that either is, or is poſſible to be. We can therefore have no Room to doubt, but that the genuine Notion of the Deity is that of *the moſt perfect Being*, or that Being whoſe very Nature includes whatever belongs to the true Idea of Perfection. Our preſent Task will be to enquire a little more particularly whether a poſitive or abſolute Infinity be a neceſſary Ingredient of that Idea.

Now this, it is conceiv'd, may be beſt determin'd by the Conſideration of ſome of the principal Ideas which are allow'd to compoſe it: By which we may judge of the reſt.

1. As to the Idea of *effective Power*. I ſuppoſe, whoſoever ſhall conſider the Divine Power (as we have done in the former Book) under the Notion of *an Ability to do whatſoever implies not a Contradiction*, will be allow'd to conceive it in the moſt ſuitable and perfect Manner: Since this is to extend it to every Object of Power. For as for Contradictions or Abſurdities, they are pure Nothings; and by Conſequence no Objects of Power. If a Contradiction can by any Power be cauſed to exiſt, it muſt be by the Conjunction of two Terms which are abſolutely deſtructive of each other; ſo as that if

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the former be caus'd, the latter can't be caus'd without the Deſtruction of the former. For Example; A Being that is entirely Man, and entirely Horſe, is ſuch a Contradiction in the Nature of Things; ſince the entire Nature of a Man abſolutely excludes or deſtroys that of a Horſe; and ſo on the contrary. But when two Things abſolutely exclude or deſtroy each other, their Conjunction muſt be (as was ſaid) a pure Nothing; and by Conſequence no Object of Power. Power may therefore be perfect without an Ability to effect Contradictions; ſince without that it may extend to every Object of Power. And though perfect Power could not but require a Sphere of Action vaſtly ſurpaſſing our narrow Conceptions, yet in making an Eſtimate of the Perfection of Power, we muſt conſider it without any Regard to the Extent of Space. The Production of a Duſt from Nothing appears to be as great an Inſtance of the Perfection of effective Power, as ſuch, as the Production of the entire Globe of the Earth. The Degree, and conſequently the Perfection of Power, is in both Caſes the ſame. And if the latter Act includes ſomething more magnificent in its Idea, it is purely on Account of ſomewhat extrinſical to Power; as was elſewhere obſerv'd.

This then is that Idea of effective Power which is moſt agreeable to the Nature of the perfect Being. Whatever Conception comes ſhort of this, is evidently too mean and unworthy of the eternal Nature, and whatever exceeds it is abſurd and unneceſſary.

But one muſt be very ignorant not to know how different this Idea is from that which the Opinion of an abſolute Infinity has oblig'd ſome to entertain. 'Twas that Opinion which induc'd the ingenious *Des Cartes* to attempt the Subverſion of the only ſolid Foundation of Truth and Certainty, which (as was obſerv'd in the former Book) lies in the *immutable Nature* of God, by extending the Divine Power to

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the reconciling of Contradictions; thereby making Truth to have depended entirely on the *indetermin'd Will* of God. Of which more anon. And 'twas partly that Opinion of an absolutely infinite Power, which tempted so many others (at least by plain and inevitable Consequence) to shake the fundamental Principles of Religion, by deriving the worst Events and Actions from the Divine Causality. And tho' the most judicious Divines, considering the Extravagance and Absurdity of these Notions, are wont to explain the Infinity of the Divine Power in such a limited Sense as includes no more than is contain'd in the former Description; yet (since the Idea of an absolute Infinity, both extensive and intensive, admits no such Restriction or Limitation) this amounts, at least, to a Confession, that when the Word *Infinity* in the absolute Sense is applied to the Attribute of Power, 'tis wholly useless and insignificant.

2. Let us consider the Idea of *Knowledge*. This being an undoubted Attribute of the same most perfect Nature, Reason will assure us, that it ought to be conceiv'd in the same most perfect Manner. To which End, it is humbly suppos'd, we need not imagine it to be absolutely infinite. 'Tis perhaps sufficient to conceive it to extend to whatever is a fit and capable Object. This we have observ'd some of the Patrons of an absolute Infinity freely to own with Reference to the Attribute of Power; and 'tis difficult to imagine what should make them so unwilling to do so in the present Case. If there be some Actions which our Reason assures us are unfit, and therefore incapable Effects of the Deity's more *immediate Causality*; are there not some Events too, which it equally assures us are no less incapable Objects of his *remote Causality* (I mean his particular efficacious Decree) and consequently of his particular determinate infallible Foreknowledge? For that the Decrees of God are to be suppos'd as the Foun-

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dation of his Knowledge of Things as future, may, we conceive, appear from this one Obſervation. Whatever was no Object of the divine particular efficacious Decree was abſolutely indetermined to exiſt, or was a pure Contingence. But properly ſpeaking, a pure Contingence, with Regard to Foreknowledge, is a pure Nothing; as having Nothing poſitive, fix'd, or determin'd in its Idea. Therefore it is no more an Object of Foreknowledge than a Contradiction is of Power. By Conſequence, the Divine Knowledge may extend to all Things without being extended to Contingences, or being abſolutely infinite. But of this more particularly in the following Chapter.

3. To conclude with the Idea of *Perfection* with Regard to *Space*.

Whoever ſhall conceive the Deity to be that abſolutely neceſſary Being, *in* which and *by* which *all Things live and move and have their Beings*, and *beyond* which there neither *is* nor *can be* any Thing; or that Being which pervades, ſuſtains, and ſurpaſſes all others; muſt, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, be allow'd to think as piouſly and magnificently of his Perfection as either the Scripture or Reaſon requires or warrants. That Being whoſe Nature poſſeſſes, or rather includes, the utmoſt poſſible Space, is moſt certainly perfect with Reſpect to Space. Such a Being is likewiſe properly and incomprehenſibly infinite or immenſe; in as much as no Being can meaſure or circumſcribe it, nor even human Imagination itſelf. This *negative* or *relative* Infinity of the eternal, independent, and moſt perfect Being, neither Scripture nor Reaſon, I think, will ſuffer us to deny. But whatever is more than this, though it may ſerve to raiſe Wonder and Aſtoniſhment in the ignorant at the Divulgers of ſuch ſublime and myſterious Notions, yet, we humbly conceive, it is unneceſſary, and can in Reality add Nothing either

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to the Perfection of the Divine Idea, or to that high Veneration with which it strikes the Minds of all serious and considering Men.

But if we will needs be more particular in our Enquiries, we forget the Modesty that so well becomes the Imperfection of our Nature and Circumstances. 'Tis sufficient that we are assured in the general, that the eternal Being is in all Respects such as the Nature of Perfection required. And certainly we ought not to wonder that the Imperfection of our Nature will not permit us to discover how the Perfection of his Nature is the Reason of his existing so and no otherwise with Respect to *Space*, no more than that it will not admit of a Discovery of the Reason why his essential Properties are so and no otherwise with Regard to *Number*.

Upon the whole, from what has been here and elsewhere observed, 'tis natural to reflect on that bold and magisterial Method of Speculation introduc'd by the *Platonists* and *Schoolmen*, who, as Dr. *More* observ'd, were wont to *spread out every Attribute of God to as infinite Excess as they could, forgetting that one necessary Measure of all his Attributes*, viz. *That they be no farther apply'd to him than as they imply Perfection.*

CHAP. IV.

WHoever has prov'd an Opinion to be both groundless and useless, needs proceed but one Step further and prove it *pernicious*. Our next Enquiry therefore shall be into the Effects or Consequences of this Opinion of an absolute Infinity.

These we shall perceive to regard the Deity under a twofold Notion, *viz.* as consider'd either as He is in Himself, or with Reference to us. Of the former Sort is,

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1. The Opinion of his *Inextention*, as it is uſually expreſs'd, or his being abſolutely without Magnitude or Dimenſions. This we have obſerv'd no leſs a Man than *Ariſtotle* to have infer'd as a plain and immediate Conſequence of that Principle. For Dimenſions whoſe very Notion includes End or Limits, could not, as he rightly infer'd, belong to a Being abſolutely infinite and immenſe: Since it is demonſtrable, that no poſſible Number of Finites can conſtitute ſuch an Infinite.

This Opinion of his Inextention being once entertain'd, 'tis ſcarce conceivable what a Train of Riddles and Paradoxes it drew after it. For thence the later *Platoniſts*, as well as the *Ariſtotelians*, were wont to infer what is uſually call'd his *Indiſtance*. For Diſtance being only a relative Conception of Space, conſequently it could not, as they rightly concluded, be conceiv'd in a Being who was, as they imagin'd, abſolutely without Amplitude and Dimenſions.

Thus far they proceeded in Abſurdity: Their next Step was Impiety. For ſince they found it impoſſible to conceive a Being without Amplitude or Dimenſions any otherwiſe than as a mere indiviſible Point; they began to ſpeak of the Deity in the like diminutive Terms, and in Effect, impriſon'd the great Creator within the ſmalleſt Duſt of his Creation.

But fearing leſt this Conſequence of their Zeal for the divine abſolute Infinity ſhould be thought to deſtroy it, they quickly ſolv'd the Difficulty with a pretended Myſtery, and gravely concluded that it was no Impoſſibility for ſuch an infinite Being to exiſt entire, though in a certain atomical or indiviſible Manner, not only in one, but in every individual Particle of the Univerſe at once. For this worthy Diſcovery we are particularly indebted to *Plotinus*, one of *Plato*'s Diſciples, who oblig'd the World with two whole Books, tending to demonſtrate, that one

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and the ſame Being may be all of it entirely in each diſtinguiſhable Part of the Univerſe.

This Philoſopher, it ſeems, had found the Secret of producing more Deities out of one than the fruitful Fancies of all the Poets in their *Theogonies* could ever make. And 'tis to this Diſcovery of his that we chiefly owe the moſt plauſible Argument to ſupport *Tranſubſtantiation*, which implies that the Body of Chriſt is in many Places at once.

But fearing, good Man, leſt this Diſcovery of his ſhould be thought inconſiſtent with the *Unity* of God, he made bold to ſtretch the Myſtery a little farther, by concluding not only that it is the Property and Privilege of the abſolutely infinite Being to exiſt whole in every Particle of the World, but that he has an undoubted Privilege of exiſting whole in the Whole of it too; ſo as to be *one individual innumerable univerſal Deity*. All which *Platonical* Myſteries were afterwards receiv'd as Articles of Faith by the *Schoolmen*, and are compriſed in that vulgar Maxim of theirs, *viz. Deus eſt Totus in Toto, et Totus in qualibet Parte Mundi, i. e.* God is Whole in the Whole, and Whole in every Part of the World: Myſteries that require a Degree of Faith beyond that of Miracles; a Faith which can transform Contradictions into Arguments with a *Credo quia impoſſibile eſt* *.

Though it is next to impoſſible to ſpeak of ſuch Extravagancies as theſe, and at the ſame time to preſerve that Gravity which is ſo neceſſary in Diſcourſes of this Nature, yet I conceive it could not be amiſs to obſerve thus much, to the End it may be ſhewn how ſtrangely the Names of Learning and Orthodoxy have been miſapply'd to Whimſies of this Kind, and how profanely even the ſacred Name of God has been abus'd to conſecrate the moſt egregious Abſurdities.

* i. e. *I believe it becauſe 'tis impoſſible*: The Saying of a certain Father.

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That these Opinions found no Entertainment among many of the Primitive Christians, may appear from divers Passages in *Tertullian*. Thus in *Lib.* 2. *contra Marcion*, says he, *Who* (*viz.* among the Christians of that Age) *will deny that God is a Body* [Corpus] *though he is likewise a Spirit?* Where, by *Body* is probably meant no more than what has some Sort of Amplitude. For we read of some Philosophers in *Laertius*, who call'd Space Σῶμα Ἄϋλον, or an *immaterial Body*. 'Tis therefore likely that in *Tertullian*'s Time, the Word *Body* was generally us'd, at least among the Christians, in such a Sense: Though afterwards, in the Time of St. *Austin*, it appears to have been disus'd with Respect to the Deity. For, says he, *Tolle omne Corpus*, Conceive not God as a Body.

And as these Opinions gain'd no Credit with the more primitive Christians, so they have found many Opposers in the latter Ages of Christianity, and have prov'd no small Occasion of Scandal to Atheistical Wits. Mr. *Hobbes* may serve for an Instance; who in his Book *de Homine*, p. 72. tells us, *That though the Scriptures acknowledge* Spirits, *yet they no where say that they are* without Dimensions. And in the preceeding Page, says he, *Substance without Dimensions are Words which flatly contradict each other.*

These are Consequences of the divine absolute Infinity and Inextension which have been generally confess'd and vindicated. But there's another which, (though it was never so fortunate as to obtain the Decree of a *General Council* in its Favour, yet) may perhaps claim as true a Relation to those Principles as any other: And that is the Opinion of the *Nullibists*.

'Tis well known, that *Weigelius* was the Reviver of this Extravagance among Christians. For one Assertion of his (among divers others flowing from the Height of *Enthusiasm* and *Distraction*) was that spi-

ritual Beings (ſince conceiv'd to be unextended or without Dimenſions) are *no where and yet every where*. But the chief Patron of this profound Myſtery of *Nullibiſm* was *Des Cartes*; a Philoſopher who has render'd himſelf remarkable for theſe three confident Aſſertions, *viz. That whatever Thinks is abſolutely immaterial*; *That whatever is Extended, or has Dimenſions, is material*; *and that whatever is unextended, or without Dimenſions, is no where.* Which laſt Aſſertion (perhaps the trueſt) is in Effect no other than a frank Confeſſion of what the Schools labour'd to conceal under an inſignificant and arbitrary Diſtinction between the *Locus* of a Body and the *Ubi* of a Spirit; which Diſtinction, it ſeems, the leſs Metaphyſical *Carteſians* find themſelves unable to comprehend.

From this Conceit that the Deity is no where ſubſtantially, there ſoon ſprung another, *viz.* the Opinion that his *Omnipreſence* and *Omnipotence* are the ſame; or that he is no otherwiſe preſent with his Creatures than by his Power and Efficacy: The like to which is by ſome aſſerted of all other ſpiritual Beings. And this is that Notion of a Spirit which deſervedly gave ſuch Offence to Mr. *Gildon* *. For indeed a Power without a Subject, is in plain *Engliſh*, a *powerful Nothing*.

A late Author having ſpent many Pages in diſputing againſt the vulgar Opinion of *unextended Subſtance*, at laſt very confidently advances this of a *ſeparately-exiſting Power* in its Stead; in which he does but act over the ſame Part in Diſguiſe, which he before had hiſs'd and exploded as too ridiculous for a Man of Senſe. For after all, this Opinion will be found to be no other in Effect than the ſame *unextended Subſtance*, which he ſo much condemns.

For though he ſuppoſes the Divine Power actually to reach every Part of the Univerſe, yet that he af-

* See *Oracles of Reaſon*, p. 187.

firms it ſo to do without any proper Extenſion of its own, muſt be confeſs'd; unleſs it ſhould be aſſerted, that mere Power is meaſurable by Inches and Feet. And that this ſeparately-exiſtent *unextended Power* to which he gives the Name of *Deity*, muſt, according to him, be underſtood to be a *Subſtance* in the very ſame Senſe wherein the Deity has been uſually aſſerted to be ſo, is equally manifeſt; both becauſe he aſſerts it *to ſubſiſt by itſelf*, or without any Subject, and becauſe he allows it to *ſupport* or ſuſtain whatever elſe exiſts; which, if I miſtake not, is the complete Notion of Subſtance as vulgarly attributed to the Deity.

But let us briefly conſider his Proofs of ſuch a ſeparately-exiſtent Power.

This he, firſt of all, attempts to prove from the Nature of *Motion*, which, ſays he, "* hath a diſtinct Eſſence from the Matter in which it is; "though we can hardly find Words to expreſs its "*Quiddity*, *i. e.* (as he afterwards explains his Meaning) though it is neither Subſtance nor Accident.

But admitting Motion to be as much a Reality as he pleaſes, yet 'tis conceiv'd, that unleſs he can prove the Poſſibility of its Separate Exiſtence without any Subject, it can be of no Advantage to him in the preſent Caſe. For the Queſtion is not concerning the Reality of Power, but concerning its Separability. But what a ſtrange Motion muſt that needs be which is the Motion of Nothing!

But he proceeds to Scripture Proofs. And particularly he quotes thoſe Texts wherein God is ſaid to have taken of the *Spirit* (or *Power*, as he explains it) and transfer'd it to another Subject; and wherein *Virtue* (or *Power*) is ſaid to have gone forth from our Saviour on the Woman's touching him. From whence he concludes, that Power can't be an

* *Grand Eſſay*, p. 4.

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Accident; becauſe an Accident can't paſs from one Subject to another without Inheſion in the Conveyance.

But ſince Nothing is more certain than that the Scriptures are not always to be underſtood in the literal Senſe, how ſhall we be aſſur'd that theſe Expreſſions are not tropical?

This he afterwards ſeems to think a reaſonable Objection; and therefore he adds, that though it ſhould be ſuppoſed that theſe Scripture Phraſes are not to be underſtood in a proper or literal Senſe, yet he conceives that when Power is ſaid to paſs from one Perſon to another, it muſt, at leaſt, import ſome new real Power ſuperadded. And this he imagines will be ſufficient for his Purpoſe.

But again, How ſhall we be aſſur'd, that among all the improper or tropical Methods of Speech to be met with in Scripture, theſe Expreſſions are not of that Sort which we call *Metonymical*, or that the Cauſe is not here put for the Effect; the Spirit, Virtue, or Power, for the Reſult of its Operation? For if ſo, (as it's moſt rational to ſuppoſe) they can't ſo much as be allow'd to import either the Tranſition or Infuſion of any new Power, but only the Production of a new Effect by the ſame original divine Power. Thus, when God is ſaid to have taken of the Spirit which was upon *Moſes*, and to have put it on the Seventy Elders, no more can neceſſarily be infer'd to the preſent Purpoſe, than that the Effects of the ſame divine Power which had aſſiſted and actuated *Moſes* in the Diſcharge of his Office, did afterwards diſcover themſelves in a leſſer Degree in his Coadjutors. And when Virtue is ſaid to have gone out of our Saviour, no more needs be underſtood, than that the miraculous Effect which was then wrought proceeded from the Divine Power which acted in and by the Bleſſed *Jeſus*.

By this Time the Gentleman thinks fit to lay aſide the Bible, and again to betake himſelf to Reaſon. Says he, *p.* 175. *The original Power can't but have a ſeparate Exiſtence; for it gave Being to itſelf, and to every Thing elſe.*

This is a Touch of the *Platonick* and *Carteſian* Divinity of which we diſcours'd before, and, as I take it, needs no Confutation.

But ſays he, *It is a Contradiction to affirm that the original Power inheres in a Subject: For this would be, in Effect, to deny its being the original Power; in as much as the Subject muſt have a Priority of Exiſtence.*

But could he need to be inform'd that neceſſary Exiſtence admits of no real Priority or Poſteriority? Can any Man need a Demonſtration to convince him that the Caſe is very different between the Creator of the World and the Effects of human Art?

Yet to give this Hypotheſis its due, it muſt, I think, be confeſs'd, that it is at leaſt as ingenious as that of the *Indian* Philoſopher of whom Mr. *Locke* ſpeaks. For Power without a Subject may, for ought I know, yield as good a Support to the World as the Elephant and Tortoiſe. And could any of our Projectors ſo far improve on this Notion as to diſcover the Secret of extracting Power from its Subject, he might gratify the Age with the Method of building Caſtles in the Air, without the Help of *Æſop*'s groſſer Invention of Eagles and Baskets.

To be more ſerious in a Matter of this Concern. Did not this Gentleman profeſs ſo fairly in ſome Places of his Book, his Management would almoſt incline one to ſuſpect his Deity to be no other than the Power or Activity which he ſuppoſes to be in *Matter*. For while he beſtows *ſelf-active Power* on all Matter, he contends that the Deity is nothing elſe but *Power*. And while he denies the Deity to be an immaterial Subſtance, and chuſes rather to call him an *immaterial Being*, he pretends to prove that the Power

Power of Matter is a diſtinct Being from its Subject, though no Subſtance; which he conceives to be a Title agreeable only to Matter. And that which will poſſibly render him yet more ſuſpected with ſome, is what he ſubjoyns concerning the Inconceivableneſs of a Power's exiſting without any Subject: Which ſeems to imply, that whatever he had before aſſerted with Reference to the ſeparate Exiſtence of a Divine Power was nothing elſe but Pretext and Artifice.

I would not be underſtood to inſinuate this to have been his real Opinion. But, however that may have been, 'tis certain, we can't be too much aware of ſuch ſuper-refin'd Notions as theſe, leſt they be found to leave us Nothing but the Name and Shadow of a Deity. But to proceed.

From the Opinion of the Deity's being abſolutely void of Extenſion our new *Carteſians* have infer'd, that he is nothing elſe but *Cogitation*. And thus his *Omnipreſence* is by them explain'd by an *Univerſal Cogitation*, *i. e.* they aſſert that he is for no other Reaſon every where, than becauſe he thinks and is conſcious every where. Thus ſay *Poiret*, *Roel*, &c. who in this have choſen to deſert their Maſter *Des Cartes* *, and to follow the Sentiments of ſome of the Schoolmen, who probably deriv'd this Opinion, together with that of his *Inextenſion*, from the Notion of his abſolute *Infinity*. Againſt theſe *Schoolmen Aquinas* diſputes, *in Sum.* p. 1. q. 54, 55.

2. Another Opinion which has been entertain'd as a Conſequence of that of an abſolute Infinity, is the Notion of the *abſolute Simplicity* of God. By which is meant the *real Identity* of all the Divine Perfections with each other, and with the Divine Nature,

* *See* Carteſ. Reſp. ad Object. 3. *where he aſſerts there can be no Act without a Subject.*

That it was not without great Appearance of Reaſon that this was reputed a genuine Conſequence of that Principle, is certain. For ſuppoſing the abſolute Infinity of the Divine Nature, ſhould we admit a real Diverſity of its Attributes or Properties, it might, not impertinently, be queried, whether each of thoſe Properties ſingly contain'd an *abſolutely infinite Perfection?* If it ſhould be affirm'd, 'twould follow that an abſolutely *Infinite* conſiſted of many (or, as is uſually aſſerted, infinite) *Infinites* in the ſame Senſe. If deny'd, 'twould follow, that an *abſolutely Infinite* conſiſted of *Finites*. For that which doth not ſingly contain an *abſolutely infinite Perfection*, muſt be finite or limited.

That the Opinion of an abſolute Infinity is the only Principle that can be ſuppos'd to infer ſuch an abſolute Simplicity, is, I think, clear. For though the Argument which ſome derive from the general Perfection of the Divine Nature, is ſufficient to demonſtrate the Impoſſibility of its being the Subject of a proper Compoſition, yet it excludes not all Diverſity; ſince no Diverſity or Diſtinction can with Reaſon be reputed an *Imperfection*, but ſuch as is the Reſult of a proper Compoſition importing a Dependence on ſome external Cauſe. On the contrary, Perfection neceſſarily infers a Diverſity of eſſential Properties or Powers united in one Being; ſuch as *Self-activity*, *Intelligence*, and *Liberty*, which can't but co-exiſt in a Being that is perfect, with an abſolute independent Neceſſity. But an abſolutely neceſſary Diverſity of theſe Properties can't but be the greateſt Diverſity, as their abſolutely neceſſary Union in the ſame Subject can't but be the ſtricteſt and moſt indiſſoluble Union *.

This Opinion of the abſolute Simplicity of the Divine Nature, how innocent ſoever it may appear,

* *See the Chriſtian Religion founded on Reaſon*, p. 101.

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has been the Occaſion of great Inconveniencies. For hence *Spinoſa* and others have argued for the Neceſſity of the Divine Action. Say they, the Nature of the Deity being abſolutely ſimple, his Decrees and Ideas can't but be the ſame with his Eſſence. But his Eſſence is confeſſedly neceſſary; therefore theſe muſt be ſo too. But if ſo, 'tis well known how deſtructive to Religion the Conſequences muſt be. And 'tis this ſame Opinion which has inclined ſome to confound the Duration of the Deity with his Eſſence, and from thence to infer, that ſince his Eſſence is ſimultaneous or unextended, therefore his Duration is ſo too: Thereby involving the Notion of the Eternal Being in needleſs and inextricable Difficulties.

3. Another Opinion by ſome entertain'd as a Conſequence of this Principle of an *abſolute Infinity*, is that of the *divine abſolute Omnipotence*. We have, I confeſs, obſerv'd the Patrons of the *divine abſolute Infinity*, for the moſt part, to aſſert Omnipotence in a ſomewhat limited Senſe, by extending it only to ſuch Acts as are judged to imply no Contradiction. But there are or have been others, who, conſidering the Nature of an abſolute Infinity, have conceiv'd it to be no leſs than Preſumption and Impiety to limit or confine that Power, in any Sort, in our narrow Minds which is uſually aſſerted to be abſolutely infinite or unlimited in itſelf. This induc'd the ingenious *Des Cartes* to aſſert, that how groſs a Contradiction ſoever we may imagine a Thing to be, yet we ought not to affirm 'tis impoſſible to God, for as much as our Underſtandings, being finite, can't be pretended to be the Meaſures of his abſolutely infinite Power.

This Method of Reaſoning ſeems to have greater Weight than is commonly allow'd it. For what is it leſs than an abridging or limiting the divine infinite Power to aſſert it can do nothing but what is agreeable and reconcileable even to the moſt perfect Ideas

of Finite Beings? Since the Deity, as abſolutely infinite, is ſuppos'd to *be* what is abſolutely inconceivable to any finite Underſtanding, ought we not by Conſequence to admit that he can *do* what is abſolutely inconceivable to finite Minds? It was therefore, it ſeems, not without Reaſon, *on theſe Principles*, that the Philoſopher we juſt now mentioned laid it down for his Opinion *, *That all Truth originally depended on the Will or ſovereign Determination of God*; which, according to him, was the only Cauſe of the Truth of this Propoſition, *That the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two Right Angles*; and that he might, had he ſo pleas'd, by Virtue of his abſolutely infinite Power, have caus'd the contrary to be true: An Opinion which tends to lay a Foundation for the Belief of the groſſeſt Abſurdities whereever the Divine Power is ſuppoſed to be immediately concern'd.

4. Another Conſequence of the Divine Abſolute Infinity is that of *Abſolute Omniſcience*.

That the Deity abſolutely foreſees all Events, however conditionate in their Natures, and neceſſarily and determinately foreknows all the Actions even of his intelligent Creatures, though free or indetermin'd in their Principles, are Paradoxes not likely to have been believ'd for their own Sakes, but rather appear to have been entertain'd on the Credit of ſome other more plauſible Opinion. For ſure no wiſe or good Man could be very forward to countenance Notions which (as commonly underſtood and aſſerted) ſeem ſo inconſiſtent both with the Juſtice of God and his own Liberty, did he not conceive them to be the neceſſary Conſequences of ſome more ſpecious and innocent Principle. That this Principle was originally no other than that of an abſolute Infinity, will, 'tis conceiv'd, be ſufficiently clear from

* *See* Cart. *Ep.* 6. *P.* 2.

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the immediate Connection between theſe Opinions. For ſince that can't be abſolutely infinite or unbounded Knowledge which is not equally extended to all future as well as paſt and preſent Events; it follows that if the Divine Knowledge be aſſerted to be thus infinite, it muſt of Neceſſity be underſtood to be thus extended. And this indeed is the principal Reaſon which is uſually aſſign'd of ſuch Foreknowledge.

With Reſpect to this univerſal abſolute infallible Foreknowledge of the Deity, 'tis the Obſervation of the excellent Mr. *Boyle* *, " That the greateſt Wits " that have labour'd to reconcile it with the Liber- " ty of Man's Will, have been reduc'd to maintain " ſomething or other that thwarts ſome acknow- " ledg'd Truth or Dictate of Reaſon.

From this Suppoſition of an eternal abſolute and univerſal Foreknowledge, the natural and immediate Conſequence was that of *eternal abſolute Decrees of all Actions and Events.* For ſince the Doctrine of *Eternal Decrees* was taught by *Plato*, it can't be pretended to have taken its Original from ſuch Expreſſions as are commonly thought to favour it in the *New Teſtament*. And as for the *Old Teſtament*, (whatever the Opinion of ſome of the leſs ancient *Jews* might be) it yields the leaſt Colour in the World for ſuch a Notion. But that it was admitted by *Plato* as a Conſequence of his Doctrine of an *abſolute univerſal Foreknowledge*, ſeems very clear from the natural Connection between theſe two Opinions. For 'tis ſelf-evident (as we elſewhere obſerv'd) that whatever is the Object of an *abſolute infallible Foreknowledge*, muſt be ſomewhat that is already fix'd and determin'd. But whatever is determin'd to be, muſt plainly either have been determin'd in its own Nature, or elſe it muſt have been determined by

* *Diſcourſe of Things above Reaſon.* p. 13. *and* 78.

virtue

virtue of ſome immutable Order of Things independent on the Deity; or Laſtly, it muſt have been determin'd by ſome particular divine Decree. That it could not be ſo determin'd in its own Nature is clear. For ſince no particular Event can be affirm'd to come to paſs by an abſolute independent Neceſſity in itſelf, nothing is more manifeſt than that all Events, in themſelves conſider'd, are abſolutely indifferent either to be or not to be. That it could not be thus determin'd by virtue of any immutable independent Order of Things is alike clear. For 'tis not only unaccountable how ſuch an immutable Order ſhould eſtabliſh itſelf without the divine Ordination, but this would render the true Deity (like the *Jupiter* of the *Stoicks* and other *Pagans*) a very inſignificant Being, incapable of any free Action, and unable to foreknow any thing without firſt conſulting the myſterious Book of *Fate*. It therefore remains, that as nothing could be ſufficient eternally to determine the Exiſtence of any particular Event but ſome eternal abſolute Decree of that ſovereign Will on which all Things depend, ſo Nothing leſs than ſuch eternal Decrees could be a ſufficient Foundation of ſuch an univerſal infallible Foreknowledge as is uſually attributed to the Deity.

But of the Eternity of the Divine Decrees, and its Inconveniencies, we have diſcours'd in the former Book. And as for the Opinion of the Univerſality and Abſoluteneſs of thoſe Decrees, 'twas generally rejected by the Ancients who preceded St. *Auſtin*, (who unanimouſly aſſerted that the Non-elect lay under no abſolute neceſſitating Decree of Damnation) and though it was zealouſly defended by St. *Auſtin*, (who having quitted the *Manichean* Sect, began to derive from the Deity all that Evil and Fatality, which thoſe Hereticks imputed to their evil Principle) yet it was rejected by many even at that Time, nor was it ever confirmed by any Synod. And tho'

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it was indeed defended by the moſt noted Writers of the Weſtern Church in Imitation of him, yet it was much mollified by ſome in the Point of *Reprobation*, or *Predeſtination to eternal Puniſhment*.

The Conſequence of univerſal abſolute Decrees was the Opinion of the *univerſal Agency of God, and the abſolute Paſſiveneſs of his Creatures*, and (which appears to be but little better than the ſame Opinion in Diſguiſe) the Doctrine of *univerſal immediate Concurſe*.

That not only ſuch as are deſervedly reputed Fanaticks or Enthuſiaſts, but Men of Learning and Sobriety have been Aſſertors of theſe Opinions, there's none, I ſuppoſe, will deny, who knows the former to have been the Doctrine of divers of the Schoolmen *, and that the latter is ſtill one diſtinguiſhing Principle of ſome who claim the Title of *Orthodox* for their peculiar Character.

I confeſs the Abſurdity and Impiety of the former Opinion are ſo undiſguis'd and barefac'd, that at preſent it finds little Entertainment with any but ſuch whoſe giddy enthuſiaſtick Minds render them both incapable and unworthy of Diſpute. But ſince the latter has been ſo fortunate as to engage ſo many learned Advocates in its Defence, whoſe Pens for ſo many Ages have been employ'd in caſting its ill Features into Shades, and repreſenting it with an Air of Piety, it will perhaps be neceſſary to give That a few Thoughts.

If we look into their Writings, we ſhall find, that as in order to the eſtabliſhing an univerſal abſolute Foreknowledge, they aſſert abſolute efficacious Decrees of all Actions and Events, ſo they ſuppoſe a proportionable Influx of the Divine Power on all the Creatures, not only exciting them to act, but irreſiſtibly directing and governing their ſeveral Actions

* *Theſe were wont to teach that it was not Fire that burnt, but that God burnt* ad præſentiam Ignis.

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in order to the fulfilling thoſe Decrees. They maintain that it is a great Indignity and Affront to the abſolutely infinite Deity, to imagine him to be no more than either the remote or the partial Cauſe of all Action. They aſſert that he acts not only *with* but *in* his Creatures; who are as abſolutely unable to act of themſelves as they were either to create or to preſerve themſelves. But how all this is conſiſtent with the Liberty of the Creatures, and by Conſequence with any thing that may deſerve the Name of Religion, muſt, I think, be own'd to be abſolutely incomprehenſible.

It is not, I conceive, ſufficient to ſay, in Defence of this Opinion, that God influences and actuates the Creatures in a Manner agreeable to their reſpective Natures, *viz.* Neceſſary Agents neceſſarily, but free Agents in a Way conſiſtent with and perfective of their Liberty. For this is to ſay what they can never explain or reconcile in any tolerable Degree with the Dictates of Reaſon; foraſmuch as ſuch an irreſiſtible Force (or Influx, as they chuſe to call it) abſolutely ſubverts the Diſtinction of *Neceſſary* and *Free* with Regard to the Creatures, and reduces all to the ſame Level, leaving no imaginable Difference with Reſpect to Liberty between the Action of an Angel and that of a Brute or Clock. Beſides, that Act which by inevitably bending the Will or cauſing us to commit what is really evil voluntarily, (which is all that ſome People mean by *Freely*) is in Reality more deſtructive of Liberty, and more deeply concern'd in the Evil committed, than that which forces us to commit it only by immediately conſtraining our Practice.

Nor is it to better Purpoſe to affirm, that God effects only the Matter and not the Form of ſinful Actions. For this appears to be abſolutely irreconcileable to their own Principles. For if he effects only the Matter or Phyſical Part of the Act, then the

the Form, or moral Part, is by Conſequence entirely the Effect of the Creature's Power. For Inſtance, a Perſon is guilty of Hatred to his Father. In this Action two Things are to be diſtinguiſh'd, *viz.* the *Matter* of the Act, or Hatred in general, which is neither good nor evil, but indifferent: and the *Form*, or the Direction or particular Determination of that Hatred towards an unlawful Object. Now if it be ſaid that God effects only the *Matter* of the Act (or Hatred in general) without the leaſt Direction of it to any particular Object, then he cannot be ſaid to concur to the whole Action, much leſs is he the total Cauſe of it. For the Direction of the Hatred towards ſuch a particular Object (to which he does not concur) is moſt certainly ſomething poſitive, and deſerves the Name of Action as well as the Hatred itſelf. But if they ſay (as according to their Principles, which make the Deity the total Cauſe of all Action, they are bound to do) that God not only effects the Action of Hatred, but irreſiſtibly governs and directs it, then it ſeems to be abſolutely inconceivable how there ſhould be any proper Concurſe or Liberty of the Creature in that Action, or how God ſhould not be the Author of the Evil, ſince he is affirmed to be the total Cauſe of the Action: Which indeed is what *Beza* himſelf owns to be inexplicable *.

Nor can it be to better Purpoſe to ſeek Refuge in their uſual Diſtinctions of *Neceſſity*; for if the Neceſſity reſulting from the Decree and Influence of the Almighty be abſolute and irreſiſtible, 'tis, we conceive, but little Odds, whether it be call'd a Neceſſity of *Coaction* or of *Immutability*; only as the latter (though uſually conceiv'd to be the leſſer, yet) is in Reality the greater Neceſſity of the two; ſince it not only influences the Practice, but the very Will, whereas a Neceſſity of Coaction (as we lately obſerved) only conſtrains the Practice.

* *In Libro adverſ. Caſtel. de Prædeſtinatione.*

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And whereas in Juſtification of theſe Opinions 'tis pretended, that the aſcribing a ſelf-determining Power to a Creature would be to render it independent of the Creator, 'tis humbly conceiv'd we ſufficiently ſecure the Dependence of rational Agents on the firſt and ſupreme Cauſe, if we aſſert that as they at firſt deriv'd their Power from Him, ſo they ſtill owe to Him the Preſervation of it, and are continually liable to his Interpoſition and Influence, according to his ſovereign Pleaſure.

Nor is ſuch a Power of determining our Actions in any Reſpect inconſiſtent with the divine Suſtentation. For Suſtentation has a Reference only to the preſerving our Beings and ſuch Powers as we poſſeſs; and is very different from an univerſal immediate Concurſe, which refers to the Excitation, Government, and Direction of thoſe Powers in all our Actions. And as the Deity ſuſtains our Beings without any Confuſion of Subſtance, ſo he may very well be ſuppos'd to ſuſtain ſuch Powers as belong to our Beings, without having any Part in the Actions which proceed from them.

And certainly it appears to be much more for the Honour of the great Creator, to ſuppoſe that he has produc'd Creatures capable of determining their Actions, than that he has made mere Machines, incapable of effecting any thing without being firſt mov'd and acted themſelves. As he who has contriv'd a Watch or a Clock, which by Means of the Spring and Wheels within itſelf points at the Hours, muſt be own'd to have given a greater Proof of his Skill, than he who has made a Cart or a Plough, which can do nothing unleſs dragg'd by a continual Application of external Force.

5. As the Opinion of an abſolute Infinity has tempted ſome to aſſert God's *doing* all Things, ſo it has given Occaſion to others to hold his *being* all Things.

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'Tis ſufficiently known to have been and ſtill to be the Perſuaſion of many, that God is the *All* or *entire Univerſe*, and that particular Beings are but ſo many different Modifications of his Eſſence.

This was the Aſſertion of *Spinoſa*, who by attempting to prove that Every Thing is God, has in Effect deny'd that there's any God at all.

That which firſt tempted him to undertake his pretended Demonſtration of Atheiſm, appears to have been no other than the *Carteſian* Principles, *That Matter and Extenſion are the ſame*, and that *Matter is in its very Nature infinite*. For theſe being once admitted, he thought it not impoſſible, in the firſt Place, to perſuade the World, that infinite Matter could not but belong to the divine or neceſſarily-exiſtent Nature. For thus he affirms *Subſtantiam corpoream, quæ non niſi infinita concipi poteſt, nulla ratione Natura Divina indignam eſſe dici poſſe.* i. e. "That bodily (or material) Subſtance, which can "no otherwiſe be conceiv'd than as infinite, can in "no Reſpect be ſaid to be unworthy the Divine Na-"ture." His next Step was to prove that his pretended Deity was *the All*, or that it included not only Matter, but All Being in itſelf. Thus in his Explication of his Sixth Definition, ſays he, *Quod abſolute infinitum eſt ad ejus Eſſentiam pertinet quicquid Eſſentiam exprimit et Negationem nullam involvit, i. e.* "That Being which is abſolutely infinite compre-"hends in its own Eſſence whatever is poſitive or "expreſſive of Eſſence.

And his Followers are us'd to argue to this Effect. An abſolutely infinite Nature can't but include and properly and formally poſſeſs all Being, or muſt needs be the univerſal Subſtance. For wherever there is any Being or Subſtance which is no Part of it, there it muſt of Neceſſity be bounded, and conſequently it can't, on that Suppoſition, be allow'd to be that abſolutely infinite Nature which

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we conclude to exiſt. There is then, ſay they, either no abſolutely infinite Nature, or elſe it muſt formally include whatever is real and ſubſtantial.

This Method of Arguing will poſſibly be found more concluſive than ſome are willing to apprehend. And whoever undertakes to confute it, will have perhaps as much Difficulty to make appear how there can be another Being or Subſtance diſtinct from that which is ſuppoſed to be abſolutely infinite (with an Infinity of *Fulneſs* as well as of *Immenſity*, as Dr. *Clarke* and others expreſs it) as how there can be another Matter diſtinct from an abſolutely infinite Matter. For as 'tis undeniable that an abſolutely infinite Matter (if exiſtent) muſt be all Matter, ſo 'tis perhaps impoſſible to apprehend how an abſolutely infinite Subſtance (if any ſuch) ſhould be any other than all Being, or a Being which formally includes all Reality, all Entity in itſelf. As a Being which is ſuppos'd to be ſtrictly infinite with Reſpect to Extent only (ſuch as Matter by ſome *Carteſians* is aſſerted to be) muſt neceſſarily be conceiv'd to exclude any other Extenſion of the ſame Sort, ſo it ſeems clear, that a Being which is both extenſively and intenſively infinite, or is ſtrictly infinite in all Reſpects, (ſuch as the Deity is uſually aſſerted to be) muſt needs be allow'd (as containing in its own Eſſence not only every ſpecifical but every numerical Perfection or Reality) to exclude any other Being whatſoever.

And not only the *Spinoſiſts*, but ſome of a very different Character, are wont to infer, that all Beings are Parts of the Deity from this very Principle of his abſolute Infinity. Thus do many of the myſtical Divines, and particularly *Benedictus Anglus* in his *Regula Perfectionis*, which had the Approbation of many of the Popiſh Doctors: Who deſcribes his *ſuper-eminent Life* as chiefly conſiſting in our believing that there's nothing diſtinct from God and living ac-

accordingly. For he maintains that Nothing in the Univerſe is any otherwiſe diſtinguiſh'd from the Deity than as the Sun-beams are from the Sun; which yet are in Effect the ſame Thing. For, ſay thoſe Men, God being abſolutely infinite, there can, by Conſequence, be no other Being but Himſelf: Since God and the minuteſt Being diſtinct from him would be more Entity than God alone. But Infinity in the abſolute Senſe admits not of more or leſs.

Theſe, 'tis conceiv'd, are ſome of the ill Conſequences of this Opinion of an *abſolute Infinity* with reference to the Deity conſider'd in Himſelf. We ſhall conclude with ſuch as have a Reference more eſpecially to us. Theſe appear to have been,

1. Its diſcouraging Enquiries into his *Nature*.
2. Its raiſing Prejudices againſt his *Exiſtence*.

1. It appears to have had this ill Effect, that it has in a very great Degree diſcourag'd Enquiries into the Nature and Perfections of God.

As God is the Object of Religion, ſo Religion can have no other ſolid Foundation but a rational Apprehenſion of the divine Nature. It muſt needs be a vain Thing to inform a Man of Reaſon that he ought to believe in an eternal, omnipreſent and omnipotent Being, the Creator and Governor of all Things, unleſs he be firſt inſtructed in the Grounds of that Belief, and aſſur'd of the Conſiſtence of thoſe Ideas. To diſcourſe of the Nature of Virtue and Vice, or the Puniſhments and Rewards of a future State, whatever Impreſſion it may make on weak and timorous Spirits, will have none at all on manly and generous Minds, till they are firſt convinc'd, that there is indeed a Being, who by Right of Creation has an abſolute Authority to govern and diſpoſe of us, and who not only takes Notice of our Actions, but will render to every Man according to his Deeds. Without ſuch a previous Conviction as this, the moſt artificial and pathetical Diſcourſe will ſeem Cant and Enthuſiaſm to ſuch

Perſons, and will prove in Effect but declaiming to the Winds.

Now it is an indiſputable Principle, that if there be a moſt wiſe and beneficent Being, who created and governs the World, he either created ſuch Beings as were capable of a competent Knowledge of Himſelf, or elſe he never deſign'd to ſuſpend their Happineſs on that Obedience, which, without ſuch a competent Knowledge, was either not likely to be performed, or, if performed, could have nothing to recommend it to his Acceptance. For to believe and to practiſe without ſufficient Conviction is no Virtue, but a Shame and Diſparagement to any capable Being.

But if ſuch a Knowledge of God be neceſſary, if it be attainable, 'tis an evident Conſequence, that whatever Opinion renders his Idea impoſſible in itſelf, and by baffling the Enquiries of ſo many Ages, has proved the Occaſion of ſo great Diſcouragement to further Attempts, can't be the genuine Conception of his Nature, but is equally groundleſs and pernicious.

This, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, has been the Caſe of the Opinion of an *abſolute Infinity*. For from hence many have been apt to infer with *Philalethes* in Mr. *Guildon's Manual*, p. 51. *Suppoſing the Exiſtence of a firſt Cauſe, of what Import would it be to us, unleſs we were better acquainted with his divine and infinite Nature than conſiſts with a Being ſo finite as Man, which can never comprehend an* Infinite? *And if we can't comprehend his Nature, neither can we comprehend his Will*, &c.

This Reaſoning can by no Means affect the true Notion of the divine Eternity (as ſome will poſſibly object.) For as the Exiſtence of an eternal Being is one of the moſt evident Truths in Nature, ſo the Difficulties which it includes (tho' in ſome Reſpects above our Conception, yet) admit of an Hypotheſis ſufficient, it is conceiv'd, to yield Satisfaction to all

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ſober and ingenuous Minds. To make this appear will be the Deſign of the Third Part of this Book.

2. The Opinion of an *abſolute Infinity* has been the great Occaſion of Prejudice againſt the *Exiſtence* of God. Though Men of Atheiſtick Principles have not always deny'd the Exiſtence of an abſolutely immenſe or infinite Being, but were, for ought with any Certainty appears, the very firſt Aſſertors of it; yet their ſuppos'd Infinity (which was no other than that of Matter and Space) was evidently of ſuch a Nature as excluded thoſe Conſequences which have ſince been drawn from the Opinion of the divine abſolute Infinity, and which have prov'd the Occaſion of ſo much Scandal to People of that Character. But notwithſtanding this, and notwithſtanding what the *Spinoſiſts* have ſince held, 'tis notorious that many others of the Clan have deny'd the Poſſibility of *a Being abſolutely infinite in all Perfections*. For what Objection has been more frequent in the Mouths of Infidels and Libertines than this, that the Attributes of *infinite Power*, *Knowledge*, &c. as commonly aſcribed to the Deity, ſignify no Idea or Conception of Men's Minds, but are only Expreſſions of their ignorant Admiration and Aſtoniſhment; and conſequently, that the Deity is nothing elſe in Effect but a Complication of high ſounding Words, without the leaſt Signification or Reality? *

For the Satisfaction of the Curious, I ſhan't think it a Trouble to tranſcribe *Vanini*'s Deſcription of God in his *Amphitheatrum Providentiæ Divinæ*; wherein he ſums up all the aforementioned Conſequences of the Opinion of abſolute Infinity with Deſign, as it ſeems, to prejudice Men againſt the Exiſtence of a divine Being. This *Vanini* is known to have dy'd a Martyr for the Cauſe of Atheiſm, being burnt at *Tholouſe*, and this his Deſcription may well

* *See Dr.* Cudw. *Intel. Syſt.* p. 640, 641. *and* 652, 653.

be reputed as an Abſtract of his Reaſons for his Infidelity. Says he, *Deus eſt ſui ipſius et Principium et Finis; utriuſque carens, neutrius egens, utriuſque Parens atque Autor. Semper eſt ſine tempore, cui Præteritum non abit nec ſubit Futurum. Regnat ubique ſine loco; immobilis abſque Statu; Pernix ſine Motu; extra omnia omnis, intra omnia, ſed non includitur in ipſis; extra omnia, ſed non ab ipſis excluditur. Bonus ſine Qualitate, ſine Quantitate magnus. Totus ſine Partibus. Immutabilis cum cætera mutat. Cujus Velle Potentia, cui Opus Voluntas. Simplex eſt in quo nihil in Potentia, ſed in Actu omnia; imo Ipſe purus, primus medius et ultimus Actus. Denique, eſt omnia, ſuper omnia, extra omnia, intra omnia, præter omnia, ante omnia, et poſt omnia Omnis.* That is (to make it ſpeak as good *Engliſh* as it will bear) " God is both the Ori-
" ginal and the End of his own Exiſtence; or want-
" ing either without being indigent of either he is
" (yet) the Cauſe and Author of both. He is al-
" ways without Time, without any Viciſſitude of
" paſt and future. He reigns every where without
" Place; is immoveable without Station, ſwift
" without Motion. He is whole without the Uni-
" verſe, and yet not excluded; whole within it,
" and yet not included. Good without Quality;
" great without Quantity; whole without Parts;
" unchangeable, though Author of Change in o-
" ther Beings. Whoſe Will is not only his Power
" but his very Work. He is ſo ſimple, that in
" him nothing is in a State of Poſſibility but eve-
" ry Thing in Act; being himſelf the only pure,
" firſt, middle, and laſt Act. To conclude, He is
" all Things, above all Things, without all Things,
" within all Things, beſides all Things, before all
" Things, and after all Things.

PART

PART the Third.

Of ETERNITY.

FROM the firſt Philoſophers recorded in Hiſtory down to the Age of *Plato*, it appears that ſuch as concern'd themſelves with Speculations of this Nature, were us'd for the moſt Part, to conceive Eternity under the Notion of a *continued Succeſſion*. This indeed was the moſt natural and obvious Conception, and the moſt agreeable to the Infancy of Philoſophy. Thoſe ruder Reaſoners, conſidering that the Life of Man, conſiſted of a Series or Succeſſion of Days, and Months, and Years, and was (as it were) meaſur'd out by the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies, were eaſily induc'd to conceive the like of the eternal Being.

But when the Wits of Men began to be more refin'd and metaphyſical, another Hypotheſis ſoon became faſhionable. For *Plato* and a few of his Predeceſſors, having adopted *Anaxagoras*'s Notion of an abſolute Infinity of the Divine Eſſence, thought themſelves oblig'd, by Conſequence, to aſſert an *unſucceſſive or ſimultaneous Eternity*. For ſince the Opinion of the divine abſolute Simplicity (which we have obſerv'd to be a Conſequence of that Principle) requires that nothing be affirm'd to belong to the Deity but what is the Deity himſelf; they therefore conceiv'd it neceſſary (as we before obſerv'd) to aſſert the Identity of the Duration and Eſſence of the eternal Being. And inaſmnch as they had concluded the Eſſence of God to be abſolutely ſimple, they infer'd his Duration to be ſo too.

This Opinion of a ſimultaneous or unſucceſſive Eternity, being conceiv'd to have ſo neceſſary a Connection with that of an abſolute Infinity, has ever been an Attendant on it. Thus it has been

propagated from the Time of *Plato* through the Times of the *Schools* even till the Reformation; when ſome having rejected the Doctrine of an *abſolute Infinity*, exchang'd this Notion of a ſimultaneous Eternity for the more ancient Opinion of a ſucceſſive one.

'Tis between theſe two Opinions that the preſent Age is divided. But if we conſider and judge impartially, perhaps neither will be found to be defenſible. For,

1. As to the *unſucceſſive* or *ſimultaneous* Eternity of *Plato*. What can be more extravagant and deſperate than to aſſert, that the Duration of innumerable Ages is actually ſumm'd up and comprehended in a ſingle indiviſible Moment! That Eternity, which is more than equivalent to all the Periods and Viciſſitudes of Time, is itſelf an Inſtant! That the Deity, who created the World near 6000 Years ago, is ſtill pronouncing the Almighty *Fiat*; and that tho' all things yet remain as they were from the Beginning; he has actually kindled the univerſal Conflagration! And not only ſo, but that he deſtroy'd the World the very Moment wherein he created it, and yet both has been and ſtill is eternally creating and deſtroying it!

'Tis, I confeſs, a Subject which has exhauſted the Leiſure and Subtilty of the *Schools* to explain the Nature of the imaginary ſimultaneous Duration of the eternal Being, and the Manner of its Co-exiſtence with that of ſucceſſive Beings. But how *ſubtile* and *profound* ſoever they may have been on this Point, I perſuade my ſelf their Attempt has been as fruitleſs as that of ſquaring the Circle: and the voluminous Labours of thoſe great Maſters of Quibbling and Sophiſtry have in the Iſſue been no leſs ridiculous than the Birth of the Mountains. But,

2. As for the other Notion, *viz.* that of a *ſucceſſive Eternity*. Is that in any Degree more intelligible than the former Opinion? What Senſe can

we

we poſſibly make of a Succeſſion without Beginning? Can there have been a Second, or Fifth, or Tenth without a Firſt? Beſides, is it poſſible a really ſucceſſive Duration ſhould be actually infinite? Can that Number to which new Additions both are and will be made for ever, become at any Time ſo great as not to admit of Increaſe by thoſe Additions? May we not as eaſily conceive an Infant gradually to arrive at old Age without paſſing through Childhood and Youth, as a Succeſſion without Beginning? And may we not as well ſuppoſe an actually infinite growing Line, or a Cube or Triangle without Sides and Dimenſions, as an actually infinite and yet ever increaſing Succeſſion or Number? For certainly to ſay that a Number of Ages actually paſt is ſtrictly infinite, and therefore cannot be increas'd by the Addition of Millions of Ages to Eternity, is not only begging the Queſtion with Regard to the Number ſuppos'd to be paſt, but 'tis flying in the very Face of Reaſon.

But if neither of the vulgar Methods be defenſible, it follows that either we muſt be content ſtill to ſpeak Contradictions about it, or muſt look out for ſome better or more conſiſtent *Hypotheſis*.

To which End it may not be amiſs to conſider the Nature of *Duration* and *Time*. For having once got a true Notion of theſe, we ſhall thereby the more eaſily be inſtructed to form ſome Conception of Eternity.

Duration and Time are both of them Notions of our Minds reſulting from the Conſideration of the Exiſtence of Beings with Reference either to a real or an imaginary Succeſſion. Yet in this they are made to differ; that whereas Duration is uſually (though perhaps erroneouſly) ſaid to be a neceſſary Appendage of all Beings, Time is conceiv'd to agree to Creatures only, or Beings whoſe Exiſtence is purely contingent. Time therefore in its uſual Accep-

tation imports Contingence; and may perhaps not unfitly be expreſs'd by *contingent Exiſtence.*

This then being the proper Notion of *Time*, and Time being oppos'd to Eternity, it follows, that as Time, (or temporal Exiſtence) is *contingent Exiſtence*, (or that particular Sort of Exiſtence which agrees to Creatures, as diſtinguiſh'd from that which is peculiar to the Deity;) ſo eternal Exiſtence or Eternity (however ſome may conceive it) is no otherwiſe to be conſider'd than as *neceſſary Exiſtence*, without any neceſſary Priority or Poſteriority.

If we keep to this Notion of Eternity, as we ſhall have the moſt proper and genuine Conception of it, ſo we ſhall eaſily diſengage ourſelves from the Perplexities which unavoidably ſpring from our conceiving it entirely under the Notion of *Duration.* For I believe whoever conſiders the Nature of the Idea of Duration (which is a Sort of imaginary Space in Exiſtence) and how impoſſible it is in any Caſe, to ſeparate it from the Ideas of Succeſſion, Parts, Beginning, Priority and Poſteriority (as the Schools in vain attempted to do) will ſoon be ſenſible, that our conceiving Eternity under that Notion, has been the original of moſt of the Difficulties which uſually poſe and perplex our Minds. Let this one Quotation ſerve for a Proof. "How any thing can have "exiſted eternally, *i. e.* how an eternal (or infinite) "Duration can now be actually paſt, is a Thing "utterly as impoſſible for our narrow Underſtandings to comprehend, as any thing that is not an "expreſs Contradiction can be imagin'd to be (ſays "Dr. *Clarke* in his *Demonſt.* p. 10.) Yet (ſays he) "to deny the Truth of the Propoſition, *That an eternal or infinite Duration is now actually paſt*, would "be to aſſert ſomething ſtill far more unintelligible, "even a real and expreſs Contradiction, (*viz.* that "there is no eternal Being, (as I conceive his Meaning to be:") Which imports that Eternity and a

real

real Succeſſion and Duration were, in his Opinion, as inſeparable as incomprehenſible.

Yet notwithſtanding this, 'tis humbly conceiv'd that the Idea of *neceſſary Exiſtence* will, in a great Degree, prevent theſe incomprehenſible Difficulties in our Conception of *Eternity*. For being us'd to think of the Deity as of a Being that neceſſarily is, as this will effectually diſtinguiſh him from all other Beings, ſo it will diſpoſe us to receive Ideas of him very different from thoſe of his Creatures. And ſince this Conception of *Eternity* neither admits the Idea of *Finite* nor *Infinite*, neither neceſſarily includes any real Succeſſion, nor abſolutely excludes it; 'twill perhaps not only prevent ſuch Difficulties as were apt to ariſe in our Minds from the vulgar Idea, but will admit of a rational and ſatisfactory Hypotheſis with Reſpect to the Thing itſelf.

It has already been obſerv'd, that the Methods which have hitherto been us'd in conceiving *Eternity*, either as entirely *ſucceſſive* or *unſucceſſive*, are attended with inextricable Difficulties. The former, becauſe it ſuppoſes a continual Addition without either Beginning or Increaſe: The latter, becauſe it ſuppoſes an *Inſtant* not only commenſurate to all the Periods and Viciſſitudes of Time, but even of ſuch a Latitude as abſolutely to exclude the Poſſibility of the leaſt Addition. Let us therefore, in the next Place, conſider whether any *Medium* can be diſcover'd between theſe two Extremes.

To which End we may recall to Mind two Principles already eſtabliſhed in the former Book.

The firſt is, That the eternal Being is a perfectly free Agent.

The ſecond is, That the Suppoſition of particular eternal Decrees is inconſiſtent with our Notion of the perfect Liberty or abſolute Independence of the divine Action.

From

From these Principles, 'tis conceiv'd, it may not be unreasonable to conclude, that though the eternal Being had no necessary Succession in his Nature, yet being perfectly self-active and free, thence it proceeded that the Exercise of his Freedom in decreeing and producing the Creatures, in such Manner and Order as was judg'd fit by his most perfect Wisdom, became the Original of whatever real Succession has been in Nature: And that such Succession as we are apt to conceive to have preceded, is no other than imaginary.

Against which Account I can think of no Objection but what will admit of a satisfactory Solution. As,

1. If it be urg'd, That to suppose the Decrees and Production of the particular Creatures to have been the Original of Succession, and neither of them to have been eternal, is inconsistent with the Notion of an eternal intelligent Deity; inasmuch as we experience that Intelligence and Thought necessarily include Succession: I conceive it may be reply'd,

That the Reasons why Intelligence and Thought are join'd with Succession in ourselves, are not necessary but purely accidental; proceeding either from the Imperfection of our Nature, or from the Peculiarity of our State and Circumstances.

1. One Reason is, the Imperfection of our Nature. Our Minds are naturally in a Manner empty and unfurnish'd of Ideas. We are originally, in a great Degree, ignorant even of ourselves. So that in order to an Acquaintance with our own Natures we are oblig'd to proceed by Steps, and to make use of a Train or Succession of Ideas as we can acquire them. Whereas, on the contrary, we have already observ'd, that a perfect Self-consciousness is an essential Property of the eternal Being.

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2. The Peculiarity of our Circumſtances is another Cauſe of our ſucceſſive Perception and Thought. We find ourſelves beſet on all Sides with a great Variety of Objects, which are continually making Impreſſions on our Senſes. But theſe Impreſſions can't be diſtinctly attended to, view'd and compared, without a Succeſſion of Ideas. But the Caſe of the eternal Being was widely different. For it is conceiv'd we have already prov'd it an injurious Suppoſition to imagin him to have had any other particular neceſſary Object of his Perception or Knowledge but himſelf.

From both theſe Conſiderations, 'tis, I take it, ſufficiently clear, that the Deity might very well be a moſt intelligent Being, without any ſuch Succeſſion of Ideas as we experience in ourſelves. For Perception or Intelligence does not neceſſarily include Succeſſion; but if it be ſucceſſive, 'tis only by Accident, and only to be ſuppos'd in the Caſes we juſt now mentioned.

The eſſential Perception of the eternal Being is therefore, it ſeems, no otherwiſe to be conceiv'd, than as his complacential Conſciouſneſs of his own moſt perfect Nature, and as terminated on none but himſelf. For that it ever had the leaſt Reference to any other particular Being, proceeded entirely from his free Determination, as was elſewhere obſerv'd.

'Tis to be confeſs'd, that the Idea of Succeſſion ſo inſinuates itſelf into our Idea of Exiſtence, that we find it almoſt impoſſible to conceive the eternal Exiſtence of the Deity any otherwiſe than as an eternal continued Series or Succeſſion. But Imagination, as was elſewhere obſerv'd, ought not to be heard in Contradiction to the Verdict of Reaſon. And there needs but little Attention to diſcover the Original of this Notion of an eternal Succeſſion: Which will appear to be no Reality, but to proceed from the ſame Error of Imagination that inclines

us to conſider Extenſion as abſolutely infinite. For ſince we immediately converſe with almoſt nothing but what includes both Succeſſion and Extenſion in its Idea, thence it happens that our Imaginations are ſo fill'd with theſe two Notions, that we find ourſelves equally unable to conceive any End of the one, or Beginning of the other. Juſt as a Mole can conceive the Univerſe no otherwiſe than as a Heap of Earth; having no other Idea whereby to repreſent it.

2. Some will poſſibly object, that if there was *once* no real Succeſſion in Nature, 'twill follow that the divine Exiſtence was *then* at leaſt (as 'tis uſually ſaid to be) *inſtantaneous*.

But to this it may be reply'd, That Exiſtence is nothing as diſtinguiſh'd from the Being which exiſts. Conſequently, there can no real Quantity belong to it as ſo diſtinguiſh'd. Therefore it cannot properly be denominated either finite or infinite, ſucceſſive or inſtantaneous. For theſe are Attributes which have a Relation to Quantity, and can no more agree to Exiſtence, which is but a modal Conception of Being; than they can to Neceſſity or Contingence, which are conceiv'd as Modes of Exiſtence. To define neceſſary Exiſtence by Infinity or the Negation of Limits, ſeems to be no leſs impertinent than to define Virtue by the Negation of Red or Blue. For Exiſtence (which hath no Quantity and Dimenſions) hath no more Analogy to Extenſion and Limits, than Virtue (which hath no Colour) hath to Red or Blue. And for the ſame Reaſon, 'tis no leſs improper to define it to be inſtantaneous; ſince even an Inſtant (as likewiſe an Atom) is conceiv'd as Quantity, though the minuteſt imaginable. But if it can't properly be denominated inſtantaneous, much leſs can it properly be term'd ſucceſſive, or be ſuppos'd to include any real Succeſſion;

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ceſſion; ſince that would be more plainly to ſuppoſe it to be quantitative.

What has here been obſerv'd, (if I miſtake not) ſufficiently confutes ſuch as from the Notion of Eternity, conſider'd as an abſolutely infinite Duration, are wont to infer the abſolute Infinity of all the other divine Attributes.

3. *Laſtly*, Some may yet object, that admitting the neceſſary Being not to have been eternally the Subject of any real Succeſſion, 'twill follow that he could never have become ſo in Conſiſtence with his Immutability.

To this I reply, That no ſufficient Reaſon can be given, why ſuch Change as is the Reſult of the Exerciſe of Liberty ſhould be judg'd to be injurious to the Perfection of the divine Nature. On the contrary, 'tis evident, that to be abſolutely incapable of ſuch Change as is included in the free Determination of Action, is the greateſt of Imperfections.

If it be ſaid that the eternal Being is neceſſarily what he is, and conſequently muſt be abſolutely incapable of Change; I freely grant it to be the indiſputable Prerogative of that adorable Being to be abſolutely incapable of Change with Reference to his *Nature* or *Eſſence* (which, I take it, is the only Unchangeableneſs or Neceſſity that is conſiſtent with his Perfection) and thence I conclude, that he is neceſſarily or unchangeably a free Agent. But if Freedom, or an independent Power of Self-determination, be a neceſſary or eſſential Perfection of God, its Exerciſe can be no Imperfection. Either theſe or the like Conſiderations oblig'd ſome of the Schoolmen, and after them, *Clara*, in his fourth Problem, to conclude, that *Deus poteſt velle aliquid novum ſine mutatione ſui*; *i. e.* The Deity may decree a new Thing without any Change injurious to the Perfection of his Nature.



TWO

DISCOURSES

Concerning the

Nature of SPACE

AND

DURATION.

I. *Of SPACE.*

A Competent Knowledge of the Nature of *Space* and *Duration*, being of abſolute Neceſſity to the more perfect underſtanding of what has been advanc'd concerning the Attributes of Immenſity and Eternity; I ſhall here ſubjoin what appears moſt reaſonable to be ſaid on both theſe Subjects.

Though I am ſatisfied that the Words *Space*, *Extenſion*, *Amplitude*, and *Expanſion*, are nothing different, neither in their genuine Signification, nor in their original Uſe, and that whatever Diſtinction is wont to be aſſign'd is merely arbitrary: yet to avoid Con-

Confuſion, I ſhall here, for the moſt Part, uſe the Word *Extenſion* with Reference to *Matter* or *Body*, and the other Terms ſhall be us'd to ſignify what I humbly conceive to be immaterial. For that there's a real Space or Expanſion diſtinct from Matter may appear from what will be ſaid.

Diſtance is a relative Idea of Space and Extenſion conſider'd as a Line between two ſeparate Points. For though the Ideas of Space and Extention can't be form'd without that of Diſtance, yet they are never call'd Diſtance, but with an immediate Reference to two ſuch Points.

As the Idea of Diſtance is in Reality nothing different from thoſe of Space and Extenſion, conſider'd with Relation to two ſeparate Points; ſo that of *Figure* is no other than either of theſe Ideas, conſider'd with Reference to three or more Points, whether real or imaginary.

Hence it appears, that the Ideas of Space and Extenſion are abſolute, but thoſe of Diſtance and Figure are relative and modal.

As nothing is ſo eaſily conceiv'd as Space and Extenſion in the general, ſo nothing is ſo difficultly expreſs'd: Which is a farther Evidence of the Abſoluteneſs and Simplicity of their general Nature. For though ſuch Notions as are compos'd of different Ideas (as are all Relations) will admit of a Deſcription by Words, yet where there is no ſuch Compoſition of Ideas, there can be no ſuch Deſcription; ſince different Words, being the Signs of different Ideas, can't jointly expreſs a Notion void of all Difference or Variety.

That the general Notion in which Space and Extenſion agree, is of ſo ſimple and abſolute a Nature, as to admit of no proper Deſcription by Words, will evidently appear by conſidering the reputed Deſcriptions which are uſually given: Which we ſhall find to be no better in effect, than if we ſhould ſay *Space*

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is Space, Extenſion is Extenſion. Thus if we either ſay they are Length, or Breadth, or Depth, or all theſe together, yet theſe are evidently but different Words for Space and Extenſion diverſly conſider'd. And ſuppoſing we knew not what Space and Extenſion were before, we might with as much Reaſon enquire what Length, or Breadth, or Depth are. Or if, as uſual, we define Extenſion to be that which hath *Partes extra Partes*, or Parts beyond each other; yet ſince no Extenſion can conſiſt of unextended Parts, 'tis in effect no more than to ſay, that *Extenſion conſiſts of Extenſions.* A Deſcription that looks rather like Banter than Inſtruction.

There's ſcarce any thing in Nature, whoſe particular Contemplation is attended with greater Difficulties than thoſe of Extenſion and Space. For here we have not only the proper Abſtruſity of the Things themſelves, but the Defects and Miſreports of our Faculties to encounter; which, for the moſt Part, we find almoſt as difficult to diſcover and confeſs as to rectify.

If we impartially reflect, we ſhall, perhaps, obſerve three grand Prejudices by which we are apt to be perplex'd and miſled in theſe Inquiries.

1. Since our external Senſories (and eſpecially our Organs of Sight) every where receive the Idea of Extenſion, thence it proceeds that as we can ſet no Limits to it in our Imaginations, ſo we are ſtrongly diſpos'd to conclude, that it is abſolutely infinite or unlimited in itſelf.

2. Becauſe we immediately converſe with Nothing but Matter or Bodies, thence it proceeds that we are apt to conclude there's no real Space or Expanſion diſtinct from the Extenſion of Matter.

3. Conſequently, ſince we can't but ſee great Reaſon to believe the Exiſtence of ſomewhat that is immaterial, and therefore (as we are inclin'd to ſup-

poſe) unextended or without Dimenſions, thence we are eaſily perſuaded, that Extenſion or Expanſion is merely accidental to Being in general, and that *Subſtance* is a more recluſe and hidden Thing equally remote from our Senſes and Conceptions.

The firſt of theſe Prejudices has, it is humbly conceiv'd, been ſufficiently detected in *B.* 2. *Ch.* 2. I ſhall here only remark a few Things with Reference to the two laſt.

The Poſſibility and Reality of a Space ſpecifically diſtinct from Matter, has been ſo fully demonſtrated by Sir *Iſaac Newton*, Mr. *Locke*, Dr. *Bentley*, and others of the firſt Rank for Learning, that it may ſeem wholly ſuperfluous to ſay any thing in ſo clear a Caſe. But that I may not be ſuſpected to ſuppoſe any Principle without ſufficient Proof, ſomething ſhall be added on that Head.

1. As to the *Poſſibility*. That a Space or Expanſion diſtinct from Matter or Body muſt be reputed poſſible, is clear from the very Notion of *Matter*; which is not ſimple, but comprehends ſeveral Ideas, ſuch as Expanſion, Mobility, and Diviſibility. Between theſe (though all neceſſary to the Notion of Matter, and eſpecially the firſt, which may be reputed the Foundation of all its Properties) there appears to be no abſolutely neceſſary Connection in Nature: But an Expanſion may, for ought we know, exiſt without either Mobility or real Diviſibility. If then we can ſee no Repugnance in the Notion of an immoveable and indiviſible Expanſion, it follows that an immaterial Expanſion, or Space void of Bodies, muſt be allow'd (at leaſt as far as we are capable of judging) to be a Poſſibility.

2. As to the *Reality* or actual Exiſtence of an immaterial Expanſion or Space. This, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, is moſt clear with Reference to the Spaces between the Heavenly Bodies. That thoſe wide Spaces contain but a very inconſiderable Portion

tion of Matter (and that without any Vortical Motion, as *Des Cartes* dreamt) may be concluded from the free Paſſage which they give to the Tails of Comets; though theſe move in Planes at all imaginable Angles of Inclination with one another, and with that of the Ecliptick, and are compos'd of Vapours ſo thin and diſſipable as to admit the Rays of the fixed Stars quite through their entire Column, though uſually (as hath been calculated) of above 400,000 Miles Diameter.

And that even the groſſeſt and firmeſt Bodies of our Earth (ſuch as Steel and Adamant) have their Vacuities or Spaces void of Matter, may be concluded from the following Reflections.

That ſuch Bodies have their Pores is undeniable. Now, theſe Pores muſt be either entirely void of Matter, or elſe furniſh'd with ſome ſuch ſubtile Matter, as the *Carteſians* ſuppoſe. But admitting ſuch a ſubtile Matter, admitting too that it has no Pores of its own, and is by Conſequence moſt nicely qualified to fill up the Pores of the groſſer Bodies, yet it may be enquir'd, whence it is that it is more ſubtile than the Steel or Adamant which is ſuppos'd to contain it, ſeeing its Particles are much more cloſely compacted and wedg'd together? If it be ſaid that its Subtility is the Reſult of the Motion of its Particles; how is ſuch a Motion poſſible, when the Particles are ſuppos'd to be ſo compacted and contiguous, that there's not the leaſt Interval into which the Particles ſituate in the Extremities may retreat? If it be reply'd, that theſe Particles are not confin'd or pent in by the Superficies of the Steel or Adamant, but have a Communication by Motion with others of the ſame Kind ſituate without; yet this is only to ſhift the Scene, not to remove the Difficulty; ſince the World is by them conceiv'd to be infinite, and to be every where alike full of Matter. If they have Recourſe to their laſt Refuge,

and with *Des Cartes*, inform us that this Motion of the ſubtile Matter is circular, each Particle ſucceeding in the other's Place ſo cloſely, that not the leaſt *Hiatus* or Vacuity can intervene; this ſeems to be the moſt extravagant Suppoſition in the World. For how can a Body moving in a ſtreight Line determine another Body to move in a Circle? Beſides, whatever Figure they pleaſe to give to thoſe ſubtile Particles, (except they ſuppoſe them to be angular, which yet would be a very unfit Figure in ſuch a circular Motion) they muſt ſuppoſe ſome other Particles of different Figures to fill up the Spaces between them. But this will put them upon a yet greater Difficulty, *viz.* to conceive how any particular Round or Wheel of Particles ſhould ſo ſwiftly drag thoſe others of a different Make without rubbing againſt the neighbouring Wheels, and moving the whole Maſs of Matter at once: Which Inconvenience, if not well provided againſt, would expoſe the whole material Univerſe to the utmoſt Confuſion upon the Motion of the moſt inconſiderable Gnat or Fly.

A further Proof of the actual Exiſtence of a Space void of Matter, may be deriv'd from the Nature of *Gravitation*. If there be no Portion of Matter either abſolutely light or leſs heavy in its own Nature, (as the *Ariſtotelians* and others have, without ſufficient Reaſon ſuppos'd) but every Particle gravitates in a juſt Proportion to its real Bulk (as is now generally agreed;) then it follows that every greater Portion of Matter muſt gravitate in a juſt Proportion to the Number and Size of the Particles which compoſe it. From which Principles it is manifeſt, that no ſufficient Reaſon can be given, why any two Bodies of equal Superficies ſhould gravitate differently (or be of different Weight) but only this, *viz.* that the one has either more or greater Pores, and contains leſs Matter than the other.

But

But if the groſſer and more compact Bodies have their Pores or Intervals which contain nothing material, how much greater Intervals muſt we ſuppoſe in the Water and the Atmoſphere which ſurrounds our Earth?

Yet that theſe Intervals (though they contain nothing that is material) are not abſolutely empty, is manifeſt. For it has all the Evidence of a Firſt Principle, that a mere Nothing can't be the Foundation of Diſtance, or that two Bodies between which there's no real Space or Expanſion, muſt of Neceſſity coaleſce and unite.

And that this Expanſion, which is ſo neceſſary to be ſuppos'd as the Foundation of the Diſtance between the Parts of Matter, is not only ſomething, but a very great Reality, is no leſs certain. For it is Expanſion which we are aſſured is the greateſt Reality that belongs to the Nature of Matter, as being the Foundation of all its Properties. And it is that which (under the Name of *Extenſion*) is by ſome Philoſophers aſſerted to be the very Eſſence of Matter. And certainly there's no ſufficient Reaſon to imagine that the Expanſion (or Extenſion) of Matter, which is cloath'd with thoſe imperfect Properties of *Diviſibility*, *Mobility*, &c. ſhould be either a greater, or even ſo great a Reality as that immaterial Expanſion, which without thoſe Imperfections pervades and contains it.

For that the immaterial Expanſion not only repleniſhes the Pores or Intervals, but even penetrates and pervades the Parts of Matter, appears from hence, that it gives no Hindrance to the Motion of Matter, and is neither increas'd nor diminiſh'd by its Acceſs or Receſs: Than which there can be no ſurer Proofs of a Penetration.

This Hypotheſis of an immaterial Expanſion, which pervades and repleniſhes the material Univerſe, as it is the moſt natural, ſo it is the moſt an-

cient Method of Philoſophy. For it appears to have been the Opinion of the ancient *Egyptians* and others, and to have prevailed among the Learned long before *Democritus* and *Epicurus* debauch'd it to ſerve the Ends of Atheiſm: To which it is ſo far from being really ſubſervient, that by ſo firmly eſtabliſhing two different Sorts of Extenſion or Expanſion, (or *two diſtinct Subſtances*) it appears to be the beſt ſuited to deſtroy the moſt faſhionable Hypotheſis of Atheiſm (I mean that of *Spinoſa*) which is built on the Principles of an abſolute material *Plenum* and *one Subſtance*.

But ſome will here enquire, What is this immaterial Expanſion, or what Rank does it hold among the other Beings of the Univerſe? As to this there are two Opinions.

1. Some are inclin'd to think it a peculiar Sort of Being (diſtinct both from *Matter* and *Spirit*.) This was the Opinion of the *Epicureans*, and has ſince been adopted by ſeveral great Men of the preſent Age. But, with Submiſſion, this Opinion ſeems juſtly chargeable with the Fault of multiplying Beings without Neceſſity. And though it was conſiſtent enough with the Principles of an *Epicurean*, who in effect deny'd a Deity, yet it leſs ſuits the Faith of a *Chriſtian*, who believes in *an eternal omnipreſent Spirit, in whom we all live and move, and have our Being*. Therefore,

2. They ſeem to ſpeak both more like Philoſophers and Chriſtians, as well as more agreeably to the Senſe of the Ancients, who think it the peculiar Prerogative of the Deity to pervade and comprehend, as well as to ſuſtain the Univerſe. For that the Deity ſuſtains the entire Syſtem of Things, and ſuſtains it no otherwiſe than as preſent to its ſeveral Parts, is agreed by all ſober Reaſoners. His Omnipreſence and univerſal Penetration are indiſputably certain

certain both from Scripture and Reaſon. The only Controverſy is concerning the Manner of it.

Now, ſince in all Caſes wherein the Learned differ, 'tis not to be expected that either of the Sides ſhould want its Difficulties; 'tis the Part of a prudent Perſon to incline to that Side, which upon an impartial Eſtimate ſhall appear to have the leaſt and feweſt. 'Tis evident there can be but two Methods in the general, of explaining the Manner of the Divine Omnipreſence and Penetration of Matter, *viz.* either as with or without Amplitude or Dimenſions. The inſuperable Difficulties which attend the latter Method have been already detected. It remains that we here proceed to conſider what may with any Plauſibility be objected againſt the former.

And ſhall we ſay, in Oppoſition to this, that a Penetration of one Dimenſion by another is impoſſible? But it has been already proved to Be, and therefore not to be impoſſible. Nor can this, I perſuade my ſelf, be ſurprizing to any Man who ſhall conſider the vaſt Diſparity between a Penetration of Matter by Matter, and the Penetration of Matter by a Being that is immaterial.

One Reaſon of the Abſurdity and Impoſſibility of a Penetration of Matter by Matter is plainly this. Two equal Portions of Matter, being of the ſame ſpecifical Nature, have no other Diſtinction but ſuch as proceeds from their ſeparate Exiſtence joyn'd with the various Figures and Contexture of their Parts. Could we therefore ſuppoſe either ſo to penetrate the other, as that they ſhould co-exiſt in the ſame Space, with the ſame Figure and Texture of Parts, 'tis clear, that on this Suppoſition, they could no longer retain their Diſtinction, but muſt become numerically as well as ſpecifically the ſame. Conſequently, to ſuppoſe a Penetration and Co-exiſtence of two Bodies or Portions of Matter, would be no leſs abſurd than to ſuppoſe two Beings ſtill

retaining their individual Diſtinction to become numerically one; than which, I confeſs, nothing can be more extravagant. But in the Suppoſition of a Penetration of Matter by a Nature ſpecifically different, the Caſe is quite otherwiſe. For when Natures are ſo oppoſite as to be abſolutely incapable of a proper Coalition, the moſt intimate Penetration can't abate the Diſtinction, nor hinder their retaining their reſpective Properties and Dimenſions. And certainly, was it poſſible for two Bodies to penetrate ſo as not to coaleſce or ceaſe to be diſtinct, whoever ſhould meaſure their common Superficies, would as really meaſure two equal Bulks, as he would have done had he meaſur'd each of them ſingly or apart. For from their being both meaſurable at once, we could no more infer that their Extenſion was numerically the ſame, than we can conclude two equal ſeparate Bodies to have the ſame individual Dimenſions becauſe ſucceſſively meaſurable by the ſame Inſtrument.

In Conſiſtence with this, 'tis obſervable, that the firſt Philoſophers, who ſo much inſiſted on the Impoſſibility of a Penetration of Dimenſions, *viz.* the *Atomiſts*, meant no more by it, than that one Atom or Particle of Matter could not penetrate another. (A Suppoſition without which they could never have form'd their Worlds.) For though they defin'd Matter to be διάστημα ἀντίτυπον, or *a Thing impenetrably extended*, yet nothing is more certain than that they ſtill ſuppos'd a Penetration of their Atoms by the *void* or immaterial Expanſion which they (as likewiſe the *Pythagoreans*) ſuppos'd to be a real Being, though intangible.

A ſecond Reaſon of the Impoſſibility of the Penetration of one Body by another is the Equality of their Natures. Every Particle of Matter has an equal Reality, and none has any eſſential Pre-eminence above another. But the Caſe is quite different,

rent, (if we may be allowed to make a Compariſon) between Matter and the eternal immaterial Being. The latter, as being ſelf-exiſtent, poſſeſſes the utmoſt Reality; but the former is abſolutely contingent, and in Effect, but a Heap of Duſts at one Remove from Nothing. And muſt we yet make the one the Standard of our Conceptions with Reſpect to the other? Becauſe we perceive a Penetration of Beings by others whoſe Natures are equal to be abſurd and impoſſible, muſt we preſently conclude it is impoſſible that the eternal Nature, which poſſeſſes the higheſt Perfection of Being, ſhould pervade a Being ſo imperfect as Matter, a Being which poſſeſſes ſo inconſiderable a Share of Reality? Muſt we needs imagin That which ſo lately was Nothing, to be on a ſudden become ſuch a mighty Something, as to exclude even the Subſtance of its Maker; in Compariſon of whom we may be aſſur'd, that whatever we are apt to imagine to be the moſt ſolid and impenetrable, is little more than a Shadow!

Thus if we form but a true Notion of Matter, as a created dependent Being, thoſe mighty Difficulties will eaſily vaniſh. And, on the contrary, it will appear, that the immaterial Expanſion which our weak and vitiated Minds are ſo apt to regard as a mere Nothing, is the chief and original Reality, and in effect, the only firm and durable Being.

But it may be further objected, that Cogitation and Expanſion are inconſiſtent. This is an Objection, which no Doubt, will ſeem of Weight to ſome People. But what Proof have theſe Objectors produc'd of this confident Aſſertion?

Firſt, ſay they, the Idea of Expanſion or Extenſion does not include that of Cogitation, nor the Idea of Cogitation that of Extenſion. This, I confeſs, is true, and from thence I conclude them to be diſtinct. But what Rule of arguing will allow us

to

to infer an abſolute Inconſiſtence from a bare Diſtinction? Though we ſhould grant that we cannot conceive how an extended Being can be capable of Thought, yet ſince (even at the firſt View) it ſeems ſo plain that all Beings muſt be in ſome Sort extended, does it not ſeem far more rational to conclude from thence, that Cogitation (or Thought) is conſiſtent with Extenſion in its Subject, than from our Inability to conceive how it can be thus conſiſtent to infer that it is abſolutely inconſiſtent? This we ought the rather to do, becauſe Bodies themſelves have unextended Properties, ſuch as Solidity, Mobility, *&c.* which cannot be meaſured any more than Thought.

Again, a cogitative or thinking Being, ſay they, muſt needs be one and indiviſible. For if compounded, as Bodies are, nothing in the Compound could be ſaid ſingly to perceive any whole Object, but one Part of it would perceive One, and Another another Part of the Object: Which they imagine to be inconſiſtent with the Nature of a Thinking Being. Yet whatever Force this Arguing may have to prove *Body* or *Matter* to be incapable of Thought, 'tis clear, it proves nothing againſt the Poſſibility of a thinking Being which is *immaterial*, ſince it conſiſts not of any proper diviſible Parts, but is uncompounded and naturally indiviſible. In the Caſe of ſuch a Being, why may not Cogitation be conceiv'd to be as individual an Action, as the Re-action of Matter (which Mr. *Hobbes* conceives to be nothing different from it) is allow'd to be?

But it ſeems, there's a Method of demonſtrating all immaterial Beings to be nothing elſe but *pure Cogitation or Thinking*, and by Conſequence, to be void of all Extenſion. For becauſe the firſt thing that a *Carteſian*, after his univerſal Doubting, perceives in his own Mind, is Cogitation or Thought, thence he concludes

concludes that his Mind, and (whatever elſe is immaterial) can be no other than pure Thought.

But though the Idea of Cogitation or Thought ſhould be own'd to be our firſt Idea of an immaterial Being, would it therefore follow that it is the only one? This would be in effect to aſſert, that our firſt Notions of Things are always perfect, and that becauſe we uſually at firſt diſcover but one Property of an Object, we ought to reſt ſatisfied, and ſpare ourſelves the Pains of attempting any further Diſcovery.

But omitting the Weakneſs of the Proofs, let us conſider the Thing itſelf. What Senſe can we poſſibly make of a Being that's nothing but pure Thinking? Can there be an Act without a Subject, without an Agent? Can there be an Act which is the Act of Nothing?

I know very well that the *New Carteſians*, to evade this Objection, uſe ſometimes to call ſuch a Being *ſubſtantial Thinking*, or a general Thinking indifferent to any particular Thought; and they tell us, that the Will is the Cauſe of particular Thoughts, by determining the general Thinking to particular Objects: Which ſuppoſes a general indeterminate Cogitation or Thinking to be, as it were, the Subject of particular Thoughts. But how there can be ſuch a general Thinking, rather than a general Motion without any particular Direction, may deſerve ſome Conſideration.

I confeſs, this *Carteſian* Account of the Subject of Cogitation is ſo far from ſatisfying my ſelf, that I'm the more ſtrongly confirm'd by it in the Opinion, that Cogitation can't be without ſome Sort of Extenſion or Expanſion as its immediate Subject. Beſides, having no other Notion of Cogitation than as by Ideas, it appears to me impoſſible that any Being ſhould receive Ideas (or Images) of extended Things, in Caſe its own Nature admits of nothing

like

like Extenſion. This Method of Arguing, *Malebranch*, (ſpeaking of the *human Mind*) thought to carry ſo much Weight with it, that it obliged him to have Recourſe to his wonderful Hypotheſis of our *ſeeing all Things in God*. For, ſays he in his *Search*, Vol. I. B. 3. *It is impoſſible we ſhould be able, by ourſelves, to perceive material Things, becauſe they being extended, and our Souls not, there's no Proportion between them.* And thence he concludes, that ſince we do perceive them, we perceive them no otherwiſe than by the divine Ideas. But whether this Argument will not extend farther, and prove as well the Impoſſibility of the Perception of extended Objects by any other Being, which, like our Minds, is ſuppos'd to be void of all Extenſion or Expanſion, may likewiſe deſerve ſome Conſideration.

If we may credit *Ariſtotle*, it was a Maxim of *Plato* and others, that *Like is known by Like*; which imports, that a Subject abſolutely void of Extenſion, can have no Ideas of extended Things.

There's yet another more vulgar Maxim, which will furniſh us with a ſecond Argument to the preſent Purpoſe; and that is, *Nil dat quod in ſe non habet*, or, Nothing can beſtow what it hath not in it ſelf. For though we can't reaſonably infer from hence, that the Creator of the material Univerſe is himſelf Matter (becauſe the Imperfection of Matter has been ſhewn to be inconſiſtent with the Perfection of the eternal Being;) yet we may, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, very fairly conclude, that ſince he has created the material Expanſion, therefore his Nature does not abſolutely exclude ſuch Amplitude or Expanſion as is free from the mentioned Imperfections of Matter. Juſt as we infer his *Wiſdom* or *Goodneſs* from the like Properties of his Creatures. Beſides, whatever Property is free from Imperfection, cannot but be a Perfection. Conſequently, the eternal Being could neither be in all Reſpects perfect without

out it; nor can he be ſuppos'd to have beſtow'd that Perfection on others which he wanted Himſelf.

But whether theſe Reaſonings be concluſive or not (which yet I perſwade myſelf none will ever be able to diſprove) 'tis enough for our preſent Purpoſe, that Cogitation and Expanſion can't (as was before obſerv'd) be prov'd inconſiſtent: Which Reflection ſecures (at leaſt as far as we can determine) the Poſſibility of *cogitative expanded Beings*.

And in this we have the Concurrence of the moſt judicious Mr. *Locke*, who in his *Eſſay of Human Underſtanding*, makes no Difficulty of affirming, *That we can have no Aſſurance of the Inconſiſtence of Expanſion and Thought*.

Laſtly, Some will perhaps object, that it is by no Means ſafe to attribute any Sort of Expanſion to the Deity, becauſe it ſeems neceſſarily to imply Parts and Diviſibility; which would be inconſiſtent with his Perfection.

But this is no real Difficulty. For ſince by *Parts* is here meant what may be parted or divided, (which indeed is the only Notion of Parts that can with Reaſon be pretended to be inconſiſtent with Perfection) 'tis certain there can be no ſuch Parts in the original Expanſion which has been prov'd to pervade and contain the created Univerſe; it being moſt perfectly indiviſible. For ſeeing there can be no real Diviſion or Separation without Diſtance, nor Diſtance without Space, 'tis clear, that where there is no Space independent on that Space or Expanſion of whoſe Diviſibility we are diſcourſing, capable of being the Foundation of Diſtance between the Parts which might reſult from the Diviſion, there can be no real Diviſion neither. But 'tis evident, that to ſuppoſe a real Diviſion of the original Expanſion which pervades and ſuſtains all other Beings, is to ſuppoſe Diſtance without Space, (or which is in ef-

ſect the ſame) Space without Space: Than which there can be nothing more abſurd.

Though from what has been obſerv'd it may juſtly be concluded, that the Exiſtence of an Expanſion diſtinct from Matter, and the Reality of a Penetration of Matter by that immaterial Expanſion are abundantly clear from Reaſon; yet that theſe Aſſertions may yet more fully appear to be neither novel nor dangerous, I ſhall add ſome Teſtimonies both ancient and modern.

To this Purpoſe, that Sentence of *Pythagoras*, Father of the *Italick* Sect of Philoſophers, as recorded by *Cicero*, is very remarkable, which (according to the Doctrine of the ancient *Egyptians*) aſſerts, *Deum eſſe Animum per Naturam Rerum omnium intentum et commeantem, i. e.* That God is a *Mind* inwardly co-expanded with and pervading the Nature of all Things. And it has been uſual with the *Rabins* to give to the Deity the Denomination of *Place*, to ſignify that he pervades and comprehends the Univerſe.

As for the Moderns; the Opinion of Dr. *H. More*, *Derodon*, and others of their Time, is well known. And for later Writers, the learned Dr. *Cudworth*, p. 14. of the Preface to his *Intellectual Syſtem*, hath theſe Words, "Whether the Divine "Subſtance be altogether unextended, or extended "otherwiſe than Bodies, we ſhall leave to every "Man's own Judgment to determine, without "dogmatically aſſerting any thing in a Caſe which "is no Article of Faith." And again. p. 833. of the *Intell. Syſtem.* he adds, "Whatever the Truth "of the Caſe be, it muſt be acknowledged, that "the Hypotheſis of an extended (or expanded) "Deity, may be very uſeful and ſerviceable to "retain ſome in Theiſm who can by no Means admit of a Deity or any thing elſe unextended.

This,

This, it ſeems, was the Judgment of the learned Doctor. And I take it indeed to be the moſt effectual Method of dealing with Men of Atheiſtical Principles, who generally laugh at the Opinion of unextended Beings as the moſt abſurd Notion in the World; and who having rejected that, and by Conſequence concluded, that whatever Is is extended, are wont to make but one Step more, by aſſerting with *Des Cartes*, that whatever is extended or expanded, is material; and ſo they think they have gained their Point. Whereas by this Method of proving an Expanſion eſſentially diſtinct from Matter, they may, 'tis hop'd, be led to ſee their Reaſoning is inconcluſive, and that though there ſhould be no ſuch thing as an *unextended Subſtance*, yet there certainly is an *immaterial Deity*, who is the Creator and Suſtainer of Matter.

But it ought not to be forgotten, that the moſt judicious Mr. *Locke* gives no obſcure Intimation of his Opinion in the preſent Caſe. Says he, p. 87. of his *Eſſay of Human Underſtanding*, "Whether any "one will take Space to be only a Relation reſul-"ting from the Exiſtence of Things at a Diſtance, "or whether they will think the Words of the moſt "knowing King *Solomon*, *The Heaven and the Hea-"ven of Heavens cannot contain thee*; or thoſe more "emphatical ones of the inſpir'd Philoſopher St. "*Paul*, *In Him we live, and move, and have our "Being*, are to be underſtood in a literal Senſe, I "leave every one to conſider: Only our Idea of "Space is, I think, ſuch as I have mention'd, and "diſtinct from that of Body." He likewiſe elſewhere expreſly aſcribes *boundleſs Expanſion* to the Deity.

After the Teſtimonies of theſe great Men, I ſhall add but one more, and that is of the ingenious Dr. *Cheyne*, in his *Philoſophical Principles of Natural Religion*, Chap. iv. p. 19. Says he, "I don't here "determine,

" determine, whether infinite Extenſion may be " the Immenſity of the firſt great Being, though " perhaps there may be abundance of Reaſon to " lead one to think ſo.

Upon the whole, I conceive it will ſufficiently appear, that contrary to the third and laſt grand Prejudice, mention'd in the Beginning of this Diſcourſe, Expanſion, in the larger Senſe of the Word, ought not to be reputed (as uſual) to be merely accidental to Being in general, but that it is to be eſteem'd to be Subſtance itſelf. For that muſt certainly be reputed the Subſtance of all Beings, without which no imaginable Properties can be conceiv'd to exiſt, and which may itſelf be conceiv'd or imagin'd to exiſt with the Abſence of any particular Property whatever: Which is certainly the Caſe of Expanſion.

Some * indeed tell us, that we have no more Reaſon to ſuppoſe Extenſion or Expanſion to be the Subſtance of Beings, than we have to ſuppoſe either Duration or Exiſtence to be ſo. But as for Duration, this appears to be no more than a Notion of a certain external accidental Appendage of Beings. And Exiſtence is likewiſe nothing but a Notion of our Minds derived from the Beings themſelves. But the Caſe of Extenſion or Expanſion is quite different.

Here I can't but take Notice of what I conceive to be a great Miſtake of ſome very acute Writers, who frequently confound *Eſſence* with *Subſtance*; whereas Eſſence is properly a Complication of ſeveral Attributes, whereby one Claſs of Beings is diſtinguiſhed from all others: But what is meant by Subſtance appears to be a ſimple Thing, common to whatever exiſts. That *Extenſion* was the *Subſtance* of all *Bodies*, the *Carteſians* might have rightly

* *See Dr.* Clarke's Demonſt. *p.* 83.

enough

enough concluded from its being the *Subſtratum* or Subject of all their known Properties. But by calling it, not the Subſtance, but the *Eſſence* of Matter, and thereby denying it to other Beings, (*viz.* to ſuch as are immaterial) they not only confounded very different Notions, *viz.* thoſe of Matter and Extenſion, but depriv'd us (as the Schoolmen had done before them) of all Poſſibility of attaining any Knowledge of *Subſtance*, according to their Principles. For if Extenſion (or Expanſion) be not the *Subſtratum* to the Properties of all Beings, it ſeems abſolutely impoſſible there ſhould be any Notion of Subſtance at all. If Extenſion be an Attribute or Property, then, for ought I can perceive, Subſtance muſt be reputed a mere Chimera, and we muſt be ſo abſurd as to allow Nothing to exiſt but Properties or Accidents, all ſubſiſting by themſelves, and each in the other. At leaſt, 'tis vain for us ever to talk of *Subſtance*, ſince we can have no Idea of it but what is inconſiſtent in itſelf. For it ſeems not to have been without ſufficient Reaſon that Mr. *Hobbes* and others have contended, that *Subſtance void of Extenſion* is a Contradiction in Terms. And on the contrary, had the ſame *Carteſians* concluded *Cogitation* in its different Notions to be the *Eſſence only of Spirits*, it might have partly been admitted, ſince 'tis that which chiefly diſtinguiſhes them from other Beings. But by affirming it to be the very *Subſtance* of Spirit, they involv'd themſelves in inextricable Difficulties: As we have already ſeen.

Here it is obvious to every one to obſerve, that Mr. *Locke*'s Story of the Elephant and Tortoiſe very well expoſes thoſe who will not allow Extenſion or Expanſion to be *Subſtance*, but regard it as ſomething peculiar to a certain Sett of Beings. For if any of thoſe ſhould be ask'd, what is the Subject in which Colour or Weight, or any other Property of Bodies inheres, he could have nothing to reply, but

that it is the extended Parts. And if it were further demanded, wherein Extenſion inheres, he would find himſelf ſooner nonpluſs'd than the *Indian* Philoſopher, who, ſaying that the World was ſupported by a great Elephant, and being asked what the Elephant reſted on, reply'd, 'twas a great Tortoiſe; but being again preſs'd to explain what gave Support to the broad-back'd Tortoiſe, ſaid, 'twas Something he knew not what. From which Story the only natural Inference I conceive to be this; either that Extenſion muſt be allow'd to be *Subſtance*, or the Subject of Properties, or elſe that we muſt own an unſurmountable Ignorance.

2. *Of* DURATION.

DURATION ſeems to me to be no other than a Phantaſm of Space or Expanſion. We get the Notion by reflecting on the Succeſſion of Ideas in our Minds; which we are apt to conceive as a Chain drawn out in Length, of which the particular Ideas are conſider'd as the Links. For ſince we find the Idea of local Motion to be always connected with that of Space, thence we come to fancy a Sort of Space or Expanſion in our Exiſtence and in that of other Beings, to which the Succeſſion of our Ideas (being conceiv'd as a continu'd Motion) is imagin'd to be commenſurate.

To this Phantaſm of Space we have given the Name of *Duration*. Whereas, had we but one invariate Perception without any ſuch Succeſſion of Ideas in our Minds, we could have no ſuch Notion as this of Duration, but that of pure Exiſtence only. For we find that when the Train or Succeſſion of our Ideas is interrupted, (as ſometimes happens in our Sleep) our Notion of Duration ceaſes, and upon

on our waking we are inſenſible of any thing like Space that interven'd.

Though Succeſſion includes a real Quantity which is abſolute or independent on our Imaginations, yet Exiſtence (as was obſerv'd in the Chapter of *Eternity*) includes no Quantity but what is purely imaginary. Whatever Quantity we therefore attribute to Duration, agrees to it not as it ſignifies Exiſtence, but merely as it connotes ſome real Succeſſion. Thus, if we ſay there was a real Diſtance between the Firſt and the Tenth Olympiads, this is for no other Reaſon true, than becauſe there was a real continued Succeſſion between thoſe two Periods.

So well, it ſeems, had *Ariſtotle* comprehended the Nature of Duration, (though he gave it the Name of *Time*) when he defin'd it to be *the Meaſure of Motion.* Which implies, that if there had never been any Motion (or Succeſſion at leaſt) there could, in his Opinion, have been no proper Duration. And therefore, if he ſuppos'd Duration to have been eternal, 'twas only on Account of his ſuppos'd eternal Motion.

It muſt yet be confeſs'd, that we can no more avoid conceiving Eternity (or the divine Exiſtence) even before any real Succeſſion began, under the Notion of a continu'd Succeſſion, than we can avoid conceiving a Space even beyond the utmoſt Limits of the Univerſe. But this (as we elſewhere obſerv'd) muſt, in both Caſes, be reſolv'd into the Peculiarity of our Nature and Circumſtances.

We can have no Idea of an unſucceſſive Duration, for, as was ſhewn, our Idea of Duration has a neceſſary Connection with Succeſſion. There may indeed be a Nature which does not neceſſarily include any real Succeſſion (as was obſerv'd in the Chapter of *Eternity*) but if we attribute a neceſſary Duration to ſuch a Being, we loſe the genuine Conception of Duration.

An

An eternal Duration is therefore as unintelligible as an eternal Succeſſion was impoſſible. For if a neceſſary Succeſſion be (as was prov'd) inconſiſtent with the Nature of Eternity, 'tis manifeſt that an eternal or neceſſary Duration is a Connection of Words whoſe Ideas are abſolutely incompatible.

Conſequently, as we before obſerv'd, the true Conception of Eternity can be no other than that of *neceſſary Exiſtence*. For ſince Duration adds nothing to the Idea of Exiſtence but only a Relation to Succeſſion, it follows, that if in any Caſe we abſtract Succeſſion from any particular Being, (as we have ſeen Reaſon to do in a certain Caſe or State, with Reference to the eternal Being) our Idea of its Duration will, in that Caſe, be reduc'd to that of ſimple Exiſtence: To which if we add Neceſſity, we have all that's contain'd in the proper Notion of Eternity.

To conclude. It muſt ſtill be remember'd, that both the Eternity and Omnipreſence of God are certain; and though we knew nothing of the Manner, they would be never the leſs ſo. But the natural Curioſity of Man, and his Unwillingneſs to believe any thing which he can't in ſome Meaſure account for, have render'd ſuch Diſcourſes as theſe neceſſary. And indeed the Scandal which the uſual Accounts of thoſe important Articles of Natural Religion have occaſioned, will alone yield a ſufficient Apology for any modeſt Attempt of this Nature.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 178. Line 37. read *Work.* p. 195. l. 34. for *ever* read *ever.* p. 199. l. 23. for *Eyes* read *Eye.* p. 209. l. 17. for *Prelate* read *Divine.* p. 244. l. 3. read *utriuſve carens.*